A Greek Dionysos in a Roman House?: A Study in the use of Retrospective Dionysiac Figures in Roman Domestic Contexts.

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Abstract

This study will focus on the use of retrospective, specifically Greek archaic, classical and hellenistic, in Roman art. This area has been looked at by other scholars in recent years so in an attempt to shed new light on the material it will examine works of art with a dionysiac theme. These are found in abundance in the domestic sphere and therefore this will provide the context for the study. It will be shown that, for the Romans, visual culture was incredibly important and each choice on the part of a patron was imbued with meanings thus these dionysiac images can reveal much about their owners and Roman culture as a whole. The retrospective styles very quickly lost any meaning they may have held for the Greeks that created them and became pieces of Roman art used to portray Roman ideals. This study will also suggest that the use of dionysiac figures was widespread through several levels of society and in the domestic sphere could have many meanings and connotations; these will be examined in some detail. This examination will show that to acquire a deeper understanding of the uses and meaning of visual culture objects must be examined in a context, without modern prejudice and be studied as products of the people that created them regardless of the initial inspiration for the work.

Contents

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Abbreviations

Author	Work	
Cic.		Cicero
	Fam.	Letters to Friends
Fronto.		Fronto
	Ep.	Epistulae
Petron.		Petronius
	Sat.	Satyricon
Quint.		Quintillian
Vell. Pat.		Velleius Paterculus
Vitr.		Vitruvius
	De Arch.	On Architecture

Introduction

The study of art can reveal a great deal about individuals, communities, social ideals, political aims, religious beliefs and economics. Essentially it can reveal a society's true nature to us. Of course it cannot be always be taken at face value and it is often necessary to interpret art through a framework provided through other evidence, especially literary sources, but this should not detract from the fact an investigation into the arts of a society can provide a deep insight into both ideals and aspirations and the everyday application of such ideas. Roman society is no exception, in fact, the Romans created a highly visual culture and both individuals and the government communicated with the larger populace through art of all varieties.

It has long been established that the Romans used many influences from the Greek world throughout their culture and this is particularly evident it their art. Not only did the Romans conquer Greece but long before this they had been in contact with them through trade, the Greek colonies in Italy, and even the Etruscans provided the Romans with Greek influences through their cultural exchanges. It was, thus, inevitable that Roman art would display some of this cultural interaction; however, we see this taken to the extreme in Roman culture and many Roman pieces emulate Greek styles to such a degree that scholars in the past have presumed them to be exact copies of Greek masterpieces. Although it is now recognised these works were very much Roman products, rather than basic copies, there are still many questions to be answered across a broad spectrum of styles, subjects and contexts about the functions and

meanings of such retrospective objects.

There have been several studies that have looked at the use of retrospective styles in Roman art and the specific Roman uses of such antiquarian pieces. However, the majority focus upon art in the public sphere and because of the grand nature of the settings the subject matter of such art tends to be portraiture or large scale divine pieces including Minerva, Venus and Jupiter. Dionysiac figures have therefore suffered some neglect due to their domesticity. There have also been works on art in the domestic realm and within these Dionysos and his entourage do receive some attention but in the majority of these attempts to decode domestic meanings for art the focus has been very much on paintings and frescoes. It is possibly because Dionysiac themed sculpture in domestic settings has been long accepted as commonplace that few have focused specifically on the relevance the sculpture may have in these contexts; many presume their frequency and varying quality points to purely decorative functions, their presence in domestic settings being no more significant than that the Romans wanted to create a pleasant atmosphere in the garden. This previous scholarship leaves a gap for the specific focus of this study. The recent scholarship surrounding both retrospective styles and domestic decoration have raised some key questions and have provided some excellent hypotheses; the task here will be to bring together the most relevant of these and apply them to the well represented group of retrospective Dionysiac sculptural art found within domestic contexts. The common conclusion in all of the relevant previous studies is that pieces of art cannot be examined in isolation; in order to gain any insight into Roman society we must also study the contexts.

Evidence

The evidence for the relationship of the Romans to their art is varied but also limited. First and foremost is the archaeological evidence: the art itself. Physical remain obviously have many benefits; we can see for ourselves the styles and motifs being employed and in combination with knowledge of the context or find spot we can draw some conclusions about the uses and meanings.

The vast majority of our archaeological evidence for Dionysiac imagery in domestic contexts comes from just one area: the Bay of Naples. As this area was buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. it is one of the very few opportunities we have to consider finds along with their contexts. Not all objects were found in situ and many are also now in museums and collections but the records here are significantly better than most other domestic contexts and because we have whole towns and several surrounding villas we can compare the contexts and finds. This allows us to identify patterns in behaviour and display and this provides much more reliable analysis. Of course, the heavy focus on just one area has inherent problems; firstly there are questions as to how we generalise the finds of just one town to a huge empire that spanned a vast area of land and period of time. Obviously this is difficult and we should not generalise in such a way, so the limits of these finds should always be borne in mind; however, where there is evidence it does appear that certain styles and sculptures were popular throughout the empire for many centuries. Although the Roman empire was incredibly diverse it was also very efficient at exporting ideas and products to its provinces and in most areas it is likely that at least the elites would have been aware of cultural tastes in the centre of the Empire,

Rome. It has been observed there were many points of contact between the Pompeii and Rome, for example Pompeii had contact with a number of Roman residents because they stayed in luxury villas in the area and also because there were veterans settled in the area. It is clear some of the Pompeian town architecture was modelled on monumental architecture of Rome which suggests some distinctive and influential links between the towns. So we can infer that even though there would have been many local features of Pompeian art and society, the residents were at least aware of if not highly susceptible to influences from the city of Rome.[1] The focus of this study will primarily be Italy itself, this is both due to the ready availability of Italian evidence and constraints in time and length. There will, however, be several points at which we see the international nature of many of the works of art we are dealing with and although on the limited evidence presented here we should avoid the temptation to generalise too widely it is possible further study could reveal a wider extent to the practices we shall investigate in Italy.

Using Pompeii for most of our physical evidence compounds a widespread problem in this kind of research; how do we study all sections of society? The literature very much represents the ideals of the elites and so we must be wary when attempting to correlate them with physical remains as the advice and ideals represented may never have existed in practicality, particularly for those outside of that upper strata of society. The houses at Pompeii, although they reflect several levels of prosperity, mainly show the homes of an undefined 'middle class.' By this vague term we refer to a set of relatively well-to-do people who can afford some level of luxury and decoration for their homes;

1 Fredrick (1995) 271.

rarely at Pompeii are we dealing with members of the aristocracy nor are we looking at those of particularly modest means in most cases. We do have considerable evidence for the homes of the upper class through excavated villas such as the Villa of Poppea at Oplontis and the Villa of the Papyri. Unfortunately this leaves us, as is the case with most societies, with little evidence dealing with the domestic arts of the lower classes as the few examples of small and modest housing we have tend to contain less decorative sculpture, if any. It is admittedly a large gap in our knowledge and some scholars have attempted to address it but until more evidence comes to light[2] we must acknowledge it as an aspect of the social uses of Roman art we cannot reveal very much about as well as considering the possibility lower classes did not decorate their homes at all.

The artistic evidence will focus on sculpture, both free standing and relief, but the use of sculpture as evidence can in itself be problematic and Bartman highlights some of the issues; firstly free standing sculpture, and sometimes relief sculpture especially if it decorates another object, is not always found in situ. Often smaller pieces could be highly portable and very valuable so we find them placed in hoards or sheltered areas at Pompeii and these obviously represent the most valuable pieces of a collection leaving us with little information about its context and display. In other situations we cannot be sure that the find spot at the time of excavation is the place statues were originally commissioned or purchased for. There is always the possibility they have been reused in a later display and this may affect their interpretation.[3] These problems stemming from the movement of pieces of art in the Roman era are

2 It is unlikely it will as the illiterate with few possessions, as we presume the lowest orders of society were, often leave little trace in either archaeology or literature.

3 Bartman (1994) 72-73.

often compounded by the fact that today many sculptures have been moved into museums and galleries and the original provenance entirely lost to us. These problems are some of the reasons the evidence from Pompeii is so useful to us; in the majority of situation objects were found in situ with other sculptural pieces so we have the opportunity to not only study an object and its context but also to consider the other items displayed alongside it.

There is some Roman literature concerning art but much of it is either small pieces of information and anecdotes or based upon Greek art. Alone written sources do not reveal much about the actual use and function of art but if we combine literature and pieces of art with known contexts there is much information to be gleaned and many conclusions to be reached. We must be careful to avoid generalisations where evidence is lacking and must use both the literature and pieces with unsecure archaeological contexts with caution. The literature of course presents the elite and ideal view of art and its functions and although we can learn much about the world and expectations of the elites through this we must not lose sight of the bias of our sources. Some literature can be useful if we do not stretch its comments too far. For example it would be foolish to attempt to study the Roman house as a space without some reference to Vitruvius. Although his manual on architecture obviously provides an ideal that would not always be possible in real spaces and it is also an ideal designed to reflect the elite way of life, it shows us how Roman houses were supposed to operate and provides an ideal for us to compare the reality of elite housing against and a model for us to measure the extent to which other classes aspired towards elite designs. Further to this important manual writers such as Pliny and Cicero provide information on aesthetics and the practicalities of display

and purchase, while Perry has argued that, due to the emphasis in the education system on *exempla* and certain traditional Roman qualities, we can use analogies and anecdotes dealing with oratory and art to gain an insight into Roman ideals.[4] In fact, some of the most useful literature draws on a comparison between rhetoric and art. We must be especially wary where attempts are made to use literary sources to identify specific pieces of art or to find an original for a type. Bergmann warns this inevitably leads to 'opacity.' This is because the descriptions in the literature are often vague and brief and they tend to relate more about the skill of the artist than the work itself.[5] Using sources in such a way is not only fruitless it is often misleading and it obscures the true relationship between art and Roman society.

Terminology

Before looking at some art work in detail it will be useful to first consider some of the terminology used throughout the study. It would be possible to write at length on the use of the term Classicism throughout the ages so here I have just a brief overview of common uses for the term and relevance for this work. Classicism has come to be a general term denoting the influence of styles from a generalised antiquity; in more modern art, for example, many pieces of architecture are considered classicizing as they use columns and pediments. It is also a term that carries with it connotations of strict proportions, formality and order. Some modern art historians differentiate between 'Classicism' which is concerned with the ideal and the 'classical tradition' which uses classical influence for parts of a work but does not necessarily strive for an ideal whole.[6]

4 Perry (2005) 17-22.
5 Bergmann (1995) 85.
6 I am indebted to a lecture of Claudia Bolgia at University of Edinburgh on 14/01/09 entitled 'What is Classicism?' for some of these ideas.

More significantly the term has been used in reference to the styles of the Greek and Roman worlds in a general way and in Roman art it is sometimes used to denote a work created in a style that reflects the art of Greece. These uses of the term are obviously imprecise ways of labelling and examining works and, as far as the use with regard to Roman art is concerned, do not take into account eclecticism of styles, copying directly or the period of the style that is shown in the work. All of which were characteristic features of Roman art. In addition the term 'classicism,' in its common use, does not acknowledge or deny that the Romans were influenced by older cultures other than the Greeks, as has been convincingly argued by Elsner.[7] The influence of other artistic styles, such as Pharaonic, Egyptian and Etruscan could also fit under such a wide definition of classicism but are often not included in working definitions. However, the Roman works certainly use older styles from these cultures in the same way they appropriated styles from the Greeks.

It is much more useful to try and use more specific period terms such as: 'Archaising,' defined by Fullerton as work dating after 480BC but sharing stylistic features with works of the Greek archaic period[8]; 'Hellenising,' that is using styles that emerged in the Greek Hellenistic period after the death of Alexander the Great. In addition to this we will limit the use of 'Classicizing' to works that show influence from the Greek Classical era.[9] As a general umbrella term we shall use 'Retrospective' as this embodies the general spirit of all of these works and potential influences from other centres of artistic production. Obviously the use of such terminology does not yield a comprehensive picture and, as with all labelling, will occasionally fail to meet the demands of certain

7 Elsner (2006).
8 Fullerton (1990) 3.
9 As used by Ridgway (2002) to describe the styles of 100-31 B.C.

pieces that defy definition. But as well as employing these terms I shall constantly bear in mind the eclectic approach of the Roman artist and shall refer to contrasts or conflicts in styles and labelling wherever necessary. No label can be ideal or all-encompassing but some terminology is necessary to ensure coherency and consistency. Thus this study follow established definitions but will also attempt to view them from new perspectives and highlight some flaws.

Structure

This study is essentially divided into two halves: in the first we will attempt to establish some context and reasons for the significance of the subject matter; in the second we shall look at some of the possible meanings these sculptures held in their domestic settings. Chapter 1 therefore is a general look at art in Roman society; why and how it was used; other cultural currents and how we should approach the study of it today. Throughout attempts are made to establish the significance of Greek styles in retrospective works and argue for a Roman reading of such pieces. Chapter 2 will begin too look at domestic contexts in some detail, as to truly understand the functions of art works we must also understand their contexts. This chapter will look at different types and functions of Roman homes across the social spectrum and will suggest that the home was a highly significant tool for the owner in everyday life for self-representation. Chapter 3 looks at the significance of Dionysiac imagery, questioning why we should study such a theme and exploring how significant these gods and mythological figures were for their audience. In the second half of the argument Chapter 4 will bring together the previous chapters to focus on religion, looking at possible religious meanings or functions for these objects when they are installed in a domestic context. Finally Chapter 5 will investigate the uses for

such objects and household display in a highly competitive political and social environment.

The study will conclude by bringing together these elements to first of all see if we can concretely assign any function or meaning to a specific range of objects in one context and secondly it will consider any implications our findings may have for further studies of Roman art. We will see that regardless of artistic provenance no piece of work can truly be evaluated without a knowledge of the society that produced it; as Richter stated 'art is conditioned not by the nationality of its makers but by the requirements of its patrons.'[10] Therefore the focus of this study will be the patrons; we shall investigate why they used retrospective styles, what significance the realm of Dionysos held for them and how their domestic art interacted with the world beyond the home.

10 Richter (1957) 62-63.

Art, Retrospection and Eclecticism in Roman Culture and Society

Roman art was highly repetitive; patrons and artists used the same forms and models endlessly and took most of their inspiration from their newly conquered neighbours, the Greeks. It is also without doubt that Roman society was a highly visual culture in which each image communicated an array of meanings to its audience, the visual was an essential form of interaction in a society where the majority were illiterate. Since the visual was so significant the practices of repetition and emulation in art, which was heavily based on Greek sources, must have had some significance; in a culture where an image spoke a thousand words surely no image would have been selected at random. Visual language requires a degree of interpretation and scholars have been studying Roman art for centuries; there have been a range of methodologies and interpretations, each of these has an effect upon our understanding and approach. Thus before we attempt to look at Dionysiac images in domestic contexts we must first put Roman art into the wider contexts of Roman society and previous studies on Roman art in order to understand how and why patrons selected their art works and how we have interpreted their decisions.

Roman and Greek art

In recent years the interaction between Greek and Roman art has become a much discussed subject; largely due to new criticism of previous methodologies. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of such an issue as many have covered it in detail previously[11] but it does have some relevance for the rest of the study and therefore a few words are warranted. Much of this

11 For example see Perry (2005) Chapter 3 for a comprehensive discussion of the problems with previous approaches to the study of Roman art.

criticism highlights the need to study Roman art as a product of the Roman age rather than using it as a gateway to studying Greek art. Any study examining the art of a particular culture must approach the subject not only with a sound knowledge of the society that produced the pieces but also with an understanding of scholarly work that has examined the same ground before. Many recent studies have now shown there were great adaptations and variations on the part of Roman artists and therefore focusing on the Greek aspects and Greek culture too heavily reveals little about either culture and devalues the individuality and meaning of Roman art significantly. This study, therefore, attempts to follow recent scholars[12] in examining why the Romans would choose to use such styles and repeat them, in order to gain an insight into the meanings Greek-derived images had for the Roman patrons, artists and viewers that had contact with them. Approaches focussing specifically on Roman culture have not always been prevalent amongst classical art historians, in fact, many early studies were detrimental to our conception of Roman art.

Roman Art in the History of Art History

The early history of studies in Roman art is essentially a history of the study of Greek art. Very few scholars set out to study Roman art as a product of its own culture or as an art form or style in its own right. It was primarily viewed as an inferior form of Greek art. This approach is in line with the thoughts of Winckelmann, an art historian of the 19th century, who claimed, influenced by the writings of Pliny, that all art after the classical period was a degenerate form of what had come before.[13] Roman literature tells of invading armies

12 For example Fullerton (1990), Gazda (1995), Kousser (2008), Perry(2005). There are many others besides but these have been the most significant in forming the arguments presented here.

13 See Gazda (1995) for a brief discussion of this.

plundering and collecting Greek art with suggestions certain pieces being particularly highly prized. This literary evidence led to some art historians presuming it was primarily the works of great masters, known to us today through literary descriptions, that were taken as plunder and more valued It could, therefore, be argued that the study of Roman art was in fact a late development in the study of art history. For many years it was the Greeks that were studied when Roman pieces were analysed.

Much of the early work concerning Roman pieces uses a methodology, mainly used and influenced by German scholars in the nineteenth century, known as Kopienkritik. This method had resounding effects throughout classical art history and some of its ideas and terms can be found in use to this day. The early scholars of classical art set out to recover the appearance of lost pieces of Greek art, known to them through the literary records, through Roman art. They took as an indisputable fact that Roman art was an attempt to replicate 'original' Greek pieces and any innovation was due to poor and inaccurate copying. Furtwängler, one of the leading scholars in this area, declares in the preface to *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*:

> The investigations which I publish here are all closely interconnected; their ultimate object is to gain from the monuments a new and solid foundation on which to build a history of statuary among the Greeks.[14]

The term 'monuments' used in this passage refers to Roman pieces. Despite his hellenocentrism he claims that the Greek works available for study are 'works of the second or even inferior rank.'[15] On the other-hand he sees Roman sculpture as preserving 'that pick from the masterpieces of the classical epoch

14 Furtwängler (1895) vii-viii.
15 Furtwängler (1895) viii.

which pleased ancient taste and connoisseurship.'[16] These comments clearly show his presumption that Romans desired works of classical origin and that they were in some way interested in what we may term 'high art.'[17] Such ideas apply many modern concepts of art collectorship and preservation to the Roman mindset which may not necessarily correlate with the ways in which they used and selected their art. Perhaps the most comprehensive description of the presumptions and interpretations of scholars using such methods is provided by Brunhilde Ridgway, who used them herself, she says:

> We assumed a linear stylistic development through time with peaks in the 5th and 4th centuries BC followed by decline. We firmly believed in the superiority of Greek over Roman sculpture; the latter was considered imitative but helpful because it copied Greek creations by major masters now lost to us, which could then be reconstructed through discriminating analysis of these Roman replicas. And we trusted ancient literary sources, although written at a great remove from the persons and monuments cited.[18]

This, in a nutshell, is how scholars first approached Roman art, 'helpful'[19] but inferior.

Not only did the approach of Kopienkritik deny Roman art the status of an art form in its own right it also discarded from study a whole array of works that could not be matched to one of the literary descriptions they were using. Brunn likened his technique to using medieval manuscripts to recover a lost ancient text,[20] a process in which only the manuscript considered closest to the original is considered viable for study. Roman art was essentially divided into three

16 Furtwängler (1895) viii.
17 By this I mean art that is set in some form of hierarchy or canon and is considered highly collectible. For example today people would prefer to collect the works of Raphael over an art student and those of an art student over a street vendor.
18 Ridgway (2005) 63.
19 Ridgway (2005) 63.
20 Perry (2005) 79-80.

categories, it was either a good copy of a Greek masterpiece, a bad or ‘free’ copy, again, of a Greek masterpiece or it did not fit either and was just Roman.[21] The ideal situation would be to locate the original but 'free' copies could be evaluated in its absence in an attempt to reconstruct the original. The use of the term ‘free copy’ and the connotations it carries are both misleading and derogatory. It simply does not take into account any Roman creativity. There is no doubt the Romans did have much contact with the Greeks, greatly admired some of their art work and were influenced by their styles. This does not, however, mean they were incapable of manipulating or adapting the styles nor does it suggest they had no ideas about art, its aesthetics and its purposes that were unique to their culture. The term puts far too narrow an interpretation on a vast body of work and links together many pieces that are very different in style and context and, therefore, probably have very different meanings.

It is undoubtedly true that copying did take place in the Roman period, in fact the Greeks often replicated too, and in identifying this previous scholarship cannot be criticised. However there are issues that arise from this which are more important than the identification of pieces that were copies. The extent of precise copying in the Roman world and the reasons for this replication need to be addressed. Only this will provide an insight into Roman culture and specifically the position art held within it.

21 Here I refer to genres that are considered to be complete innovations of the Roman period such as historical reliefs and Roman style portraiture. As far as I am aware they have always been separated from the body of works considered to be copies and treated separately. Although they have been studied for many years the main interest has been reserved for pieces thought to exactly replicate the Greek masters. The work of Gazda (1995) attempts to correlate the two to give a more complete image of Roman society.

The Importance of Art in the Study of Roman Society

Rome was an image based culture; art and architecture provided the means for communication on both a very grand scale and in more modest and intimate settings. This is both beneficial and problematic for us; it means we can gain an insight into Roman society through the material remains we have but we first have to decode the visual language with which the society communicated.

Hölscher has advocated, in recent years, the idea of cultural memory. He suggests that in each community a common past, or conception of the past, leads to shared ideals and the ability to communicate them to one another.[22] Some of his ideas have considerable merit; it stands to reason that every culture must have a set of shared values and these should be based upon the present but with a bearing in the past, whether real or created, to give them weight and authority.[23] He distinguishes between two types of past, firstly there is the shared culture or knowledge which has its origins in some distant time, often considered eternal or without a specific date, and secondly memory, this is the shared past a culture creates for itself through its monuments, literature and art. Both concepts shape and are shaped by the ideals and traditions of the particular culture and effect the self-perception and the self-presentation of both the individual and the group.[24] This allows us, when approaching Roman art, to consider pieces not in isolation but as part of a wider context of a society of shared experiences. It suggests that no choice on the part of the Roman patron should be considered as irrelevant either because it is common or thought of as a decorative choice because even purely aesthetic choices are based on this

22 Hölscher (2006) 241.

23 This allows for the tendency in societies to create mythical pasts, as long as these are accepted by the community as a whole they are as valid as actual historical events, perhaps even more so as they reveal more about the ideals of the society through their concept of the past.

24 Hölscher (2006) 241-242.

shared experience and can, therefore, still reveal much about Roman cultural knowledge and memory. Viewing art in this way, as part of a whole culture and its past, is vital if we wish to understand why the pieces were commissioned and displayed in the way they were.

The most significant aspect of Hölscher's theory is his emphasis upon the present. Although he recognises the presence of influences from the past, he highlights that as this visual language, through cultural memory, is something very much based in the present, the art works created or displayed within the framework of this should also be considered as part of the present with equally current and relevant meanings.[25] This discounts interpreting the use of retrospective styles according to knowledge of the original uses of a motif or piece of art and heavily advocates using knowledge of Roman culture to deal with the styles they used. This is the only way forward when examining Roman art. To search for readings based on, or relating to, the use of objects or styles in other older cultures adds nothing to our understanding of the pieces themselves or the society they represent.

Within Hölscher's concept is the supposition that visual messages could be understood without specific knowledge of the forms used or the original meanings of these forms, if, as they often were, they were appropriated from somewhere else.[26] This is because the language being used is common to all, an inherent part of the shared culture, the past is made implicit in the objects rather than explicit and the need for education and training to understand the visual is unnecessary. Without a common mode of representation, essentiall

25 Hölscher (2006) 241.
26 Hölscher (2006) 243-244.

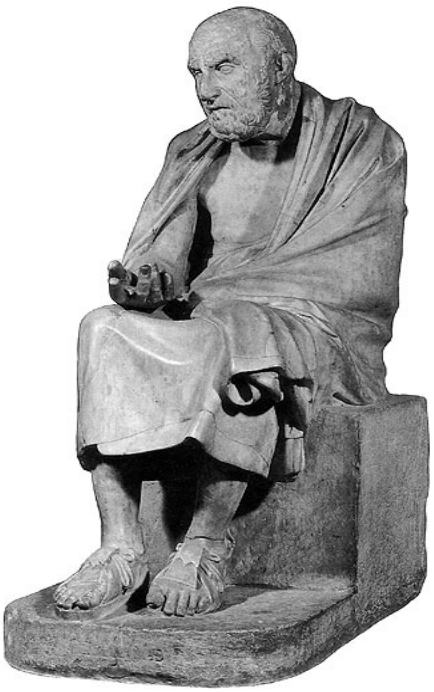


Fig. 1. Chrysippos

Fig. 2. Tiberius in similar pose to Chrysippos

language based on certain ways of depicting an image, thoroughly diffused across all classes visual communication would have been very difficult and limited to certain groups. For Roman art to have functioned effectively it must have been easily interpreted by the common man as well as by educated elites or the message would have been lost or redundant. It would have been of little benefit to governments if the imperial monuments scattered across the Empire could not be understood by all classes and cultures contained within the system of rule. It is, therefore, more likely certain styles and motifs came to have associations that could be understood by anyone, even if they did not know the representation. For example the re-use of the pose of an heroic athlete may not be recognisable to the masses as an athlete but they would surely understand it as an image of strength, likewise the use of an Hellenistic philosopher pose may not remind most people of Chrysippus (Fig.1.) but they would recognise wisdom, presumably the image Tiberius is attempting to display in Fig.2. This

use of images does also allow, in most cases, for a deeper and more nuanced reading by those with the appropriate educational background but it does not render such an education as essential.

This may offer an explanation for the intense repetition we find in Roman art, not only repetition of specific types time and time again but simple repetition of forms and styles. Certain figures or poses may have gained their Roman meanings from repetition many times in Roman contexts; eventually the fact they were derived from the Greeks became irrelevant to most of the people and their meanings in their new settings paramount. Once these forms were fully enveloped in Roman cultural memory they were replicated frequently as part of a visual language as a convenient and easy way to display a particular idea. Once they had a specific meaning or connotations of an ideal they became building blocks with which to construct a message and this significance could be changed or enhanced by altering the context or by combining objects with other figures.[27]

Repetition, it has been argued, was, actually, a pervading influence throughout Roman society and especially in the education system. Kousser tells us that throughout a Roman education pupils were taught through constant repetition in all manner of subjects.[28] With repetition came a pride in the ability to emulate with adaptation, students would be expected to draw from examples they had learned and select the best elements of each.[29] It was a prevalent idea in Roman society that the best way to create was to use highlights of earlier models. For example Quintillian draws attention to the qualities and failings of

27 Bartman (1994) 71.
28 Kousser (2008) 2.
29 Kousser (2008) 2.

various artists giving the overall impression that if they could be combined perfect artworks would be created.[30] Rhetoric too used this method, a selection of renowned works would be memorised and appropriate pieces selected when required allowing the orator to use the best possible arguments or descriptions at his disposal.[31] Thus all educated Romans would presumably have had a great appreciation for repeated forms as long as they were executed in an inventive way. Although the Romans did have the techniques to produce mechanical, identical copies we rarely see these being used and if they are it is usually for parts rather than the whole of a composition.[32] In behaviour repetition was significant too. Through the ancestor cult young Romans were taught to emulate the actions and behaviour of the upstanding citizens that were their forefathers.[33] We see that in all aspects of Roman culture emulation was a positive attribute; it helped to reinforce traditions and values and provided *exempla* for others to follow.

Eclecticism

Emulation is not the only feature of these works in a Greek style to stand out to the modern viewer; eclecticism was rife in Roman culture also.[34] Although many Roman art works do use retrospective styles they rarely use just one, so a work may have an athletic classical pose with a severe style head or even a veristic Roman portrait, for example the Pseudo-Athlete from Delos (Fig.3.) in which an idealised body is combined with portrait features. Likewise figures of

30 Quint. 7.10.7. Taken from Stuart -Jones (1966) xxxii.
31 Perry (2005) 36. One example given is that of Cicero stating the thoughts and language that make up a speech must be chosen to suit the subject matter, audience and historical situation.
32 We have for example marks for pointing and plaster casts for individual body parts. Presumably a patron could choose which parts he wanted for his figure and have them put together. For detailed explanations of sculptural production techniques see Durnan (2000), Hemmingway (2000) and Ling (2000)
33 Perry (2005) 29-31
34 Perry (2005) for an in depth discussion of eclecticism see Chapter 4.

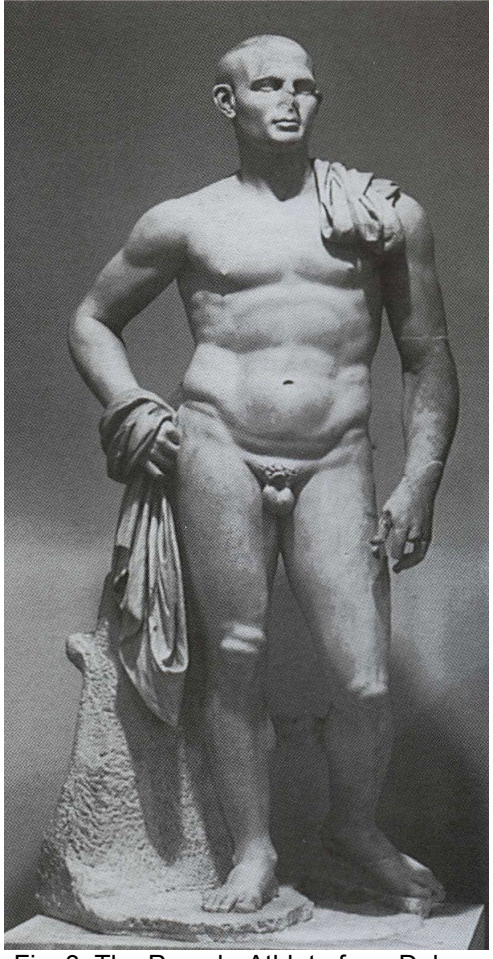


Fig. 3. The Pseudo-Athlete from Delos.

different origins could be combined in groups or the image of a statue maybe put into relief. Of course many were created in a much more seamless and harmonised way than slightly incongruous figures like the Pseudo-Athlete. Eclecticism is very much in keeping with the Roman approach to empire, they were not intimidated by the prospect of fusing different cultures or styles and drew inspiration from a huge variety of sources. The key was using these eclectic assemblages to say something fundamentally Roman and to display one's *Romanitas*. This eclectic approach allowed those from outside Rome and Italy to fully participate in Roman society using aspects of their own and other cultures as long as Roman values and traditions were present in a significant enough way to prevent it being too far outside the value system. It was a fine balance in such a competitive society attempting to be innovative or presenting individual tastes whilst remaining within certain conventions. But it was also a flexible system that allowed for progression and inclusion.

Eclecticism also appears to characterise the Roman approach to sculptural assemblages. Although they would contain a variety of objects suitable for the setting the styles, origins and figures of such groupings could be highly disparate. For example the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum contained amongst other things; about twenty two bronze portraits, eighteen marble portraits, statues of animals, statues of satyrs, an Archaistic bust of Apollo, a Classical head of a woman, a bronze Hermes, a marble Pan coupling with a she-goat, and life-size herms including one of Ammon.[35] It was possible for a patron to display a wealth of interests or simply just his wealth in such collections and, yet again, the lack of coherence with regard to style and provenance suggests aesthetics were not the primary concern when purchasing artistic pieces. These assemblages not only displayed wealth but also, through their eclecticism, showed power and tradition.[36] Most town centres and especially Rome contained eclectic sculptural displays also, often consisting of plundered goods, and in aligning themselves with the emperors and prestigious owners of these grand public museums private citizens could hope to portray a similar social status.

Eclecticism and emulation do not only occur with regards to the Greek world in Roman art. We often find retrospective Greek pieces in assemblages with art from all over the empire and also with Roman works taking inspiration from other cultures. In Italy they were particularly enamoured with Egyptian and Oriental culture. One well known example of a decorative scheme combining

35 For detail on the busts see Dillon (2000), for the rest of the sculpture see Mattusch (2005) where a list similar to this one is provided on page 17 and an extensive catalogue provides further details.

36 Bartman (1994) 72.

many foreign elements is the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii: as well as the infamous Dionysiac frescoes there are rooms decorated with deities and animals in Pharaonic form.[37] The same eclecticism is present in both sculptural and painted decoration. This demonstrates just how varied Roman tastes were and although the majority of retrospective items appear to be Greek they were not the only ones; power and wealth were probably better expressed through a combination of styles spanning the empire like the public collections in Rome.

Decorum

The question still remains: how were motifs and styles selected for this shared visual language? Here various ancient sources and modern scholars point to the concept of *Decorum* as a guiding principle for both patrons and artists. This Roman notion is concerned with appropriateness. In both art and rhetoric the most admired skill was the ability to make the style and subject matter fit the context, in fact, in many situations, it was considered essential.[38] An understanding of this concept allows us to appreciate many aspects of the Roman art world. It provides some explanation for the eclecticism and variety we see within Roman art; Hölscher has gone so far as to assign a set of meanings to each style used, although there are problems with attempting to set such strict boundaries on widely varied works the general principle works well with our understanding of *Decorum*.[39] Vitruvius provides us with a definition for decorum in *On Architecture* he states it is*:*

That perfection of style which comes when a work is authoritatively constructed on approved principles. It arises from prescription, from usage or

37 Elsner (2006) 278.
38 Perry (2005) 36.
39 Hölscher (2006) 244. This set of meanings will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

from nature.[40]

Here we see the emphasis upon creating something according to convention or 'approved principles.' The onus is very much on creating something appropriate for its function and it must adhere to the expectations set out by society or at least by those capable of sanctioning something as suitable: the elites.

The letters of Cicero regarding the purchase of art pieces adds considerable weight to the use of *Decorum* as a criterion for selection. In a letter to M. Fabius Gallus he talks of his disgruntlement when Maenads are sent to him because of their inappropriateness for his desired setting. He says he is trying to decorate his palaestra in imitation of lecture halls and wants pieces suitable for such a setting, he admits the bacchantes are 'pretty little things' but questions where he will be able put them.[41] This and other letters he sent concerning the purchase and use of art show little interest in artist, style or quality with the suitability of the figures for the context providing the overriding concern.

It is likely that in the visual language created by Roman society remaining within the established conventions was of paramount importance. This of course is vital in a culture where the vast majority of communication is through the visual as certain codes must be in place to make such a language accessible to all and for the patron who wishes his work to be understood correctly it is equally important that he select an appropriate setting. Conventions and traditions did not necessarily restrict the artist but did provide a framework through which the art gained its meaning. With so many influences infiltrating

40 Vitr. *Arch*. 1.2.5.
41 Cic. *Fam*. 7.23.2.

Rome and throughout the Empire some form of structure was surely essential.

Greek Masters

As we have seen, aesthetics were not the driving force for the selection of art works. However, for some they must have played a part and it is certainly true that individual patrons would have had their own input into what they bought. Significantly we have not yet addressed the evidence for the collecting of works of Greek masters by individual Romans. There is certainly much literary evidence that suggests an interest on the part of educated Romans, at least, in the great Greek sculptors; Quintillian, Cicero, Pliny and Strabo all praise particular sculptors;[42] however, we cannot necessarily match the work of these sculptors to specific objects. It may be the case that some of the types we find replicated again and again were based on famous Greek sculptors and Gaifmann has presented a convincing case for the production of statuettes of Greek cult statues as souvenirs both before and during the Roman era[43] but without more precise descriptions we cannot be certain. As far as the Roman patron is concerned, although there may have been some interest in famous types it is likely there were other more pressing factors influencing his choices: we have seen it was important for him to find art works that communicated the message he wished to portray about himself, that were appropriate for the setting he wished to display them in and were appropriate and culturally au-courant enough to withstand criticism from his peers. We have also seen that often emulation and eclecticism characterised Roman art and therefore owning an original or precise copy of one probably did not carry as much prestige as we may like to assume.

42 Qunit. 7.10.7., Cic. Brut.18.70., Strab. 8.372. Plin. (E) HN. 34.7-49. All of these passages are in Stuart-Jones (1966) xxxii-xxxv.
43 Gaifmann (2006) 258-279.

It is probable that the use of Greek styles to build the visual language that was so important in Roman culture was simply a matter of convenience. The styles they appropriated were already having some influence upon the art of the Romans and their neighbours and after the conquest of Greece a flood of Greek art made it even easier to use these styles as opposed to creating new ones or adapting others. Greek culture was already prevalent in society and many already associated Greek styles with certain ideals or meanings. Therefore, although it was obviously significant that the Romans used the art of Greece and this can teach us a lot about the exchange between the two cultures, the appropriation of Greek styles for communication was more a symptom of exposure to the Greek culture for a long period rather than any form of artistic revolution. Greek art was already part of the Roman cultural memory long before the conquest of Greece, becoming victors simply added a new depth of meaning and made emulation easier.

Summary

The various nuances of art collecting we have discussed here make it highly probable early scholarship was wrong in its presumption the Romans collected the works of Greek masters for the sake of owning them. Literature shows there was an awareness amongst some groups in society of the works of such masters and even an appreciation of their abilities but on a practical scale, for selecting and displaying sculpture, the artist of the original does not appear to have been an overriding concern. There was so much emulation, adaptation and eclecticism that any 'masterpieces' would be considerably altered in the process anyway and in selecting for their displays owners seem to have preferred

suitable works that could show their full participation in the cultural memory of society.

There were many opportunities for the Roman artist and patron to create their own compositions. In this respect and because the images had been completely removed from their original contexts it is much more appropriate to disregard any meaning these objects or their originals may have had in the Greek world. It is highly unlikely the Romans buying or commissioning such items were aware of or had much respect for such meanings. Instead we should focus on these objects in their Roman contexts as it is evidently their new settings that are the key to understanding how the images functioned in Roman visual culture. Once absorbed into the cultural memory of the Romans there is little doubt these figures and styles very much became the property of a new culture. They became devoid of any Greek meaning but brimming with new Roman ones and the repetition of the same images and styles only helped to cement these meanings deeper into the Roman consciousness.

The Roman Household: Public v. Private, Religious v. Secular

The Roman Household was a hive of activity. It functioned not only as residence but also as a partially public building, therefore, it provides a wealth of evidence about image, public display and social interaction. As this study attempts to find some reason for the repetition of Dionysiac images in Greek styles and particularly for their heavy use in domestic settings it is important we first focus upon these contexts. Only by comprehending the importance of the household in Roman society can we understand the use of these images. In all societies the study of domestic contexts can reveal much about the values and ideals of a group but this is especially relevant in Rome where domestic situations were constantly under the scrutiny of critics and peers. The Roman household also afforded great opportunities for it's owners to demonstrate their *Romanitas* and their adherence to the prevalent social *mores*.

There were many types of housing available to the Roman citizen but primarily they fall into two distinct categories: those in town and those in the country. For the elites and middle classes homes within the town were places for public display; for those involved in trade or politics the *domus* was also an office and place of business. The other residences owned by these classes outside of the towns devoted to the pursuit of leisure. These retreats primarily functioned as private residences where the owner could indulge in private passions but it is clear from the literature that this was never really the case as guests were frequent additions to the household and the activities and expenditure of these luxury villas were still open to censure. So whether we examine modest town houses or grand coastal villas we are dealing with the same basic requirements from the building; the need to adhere to conventions and reflect the family's

social position is always present and so the space has to allow the family to fulfil social demands and display their status.

Residence

The basic function of every house is to provide a place for the inhabitants to live. Roman homes were no different, however, those using a Roman household were much more numerous than in most homes today. The household did not only include the family but also extended family, slaves and clients. This changing and extended group of people using the space required the Roman home to be flexible and easily adapted. There have been attempts to assign functions to specific rooms in the remains of houses; such assignations are largely based on the surviving works of Vitruvius and the plans of the houses at Pompeii. This labelling, however, seems a fruitless task when one considers the lack of material evidence within the rooms to support the functions assigned and our knowledge of the constantly changing needs of the household. It instead seems more likely that although there may have been some division between public and more private spaces all areas could be multifunctional and used by all members of the household at various points.[44] Likewise attempts to find gender divisions or spaces for children in the houses have not been very successful.[45] Only the largest of the houses in Pompeii show specific areas in the archaeological remains designed for servile and domestic tasks,[46] for example the House of the Faun, one of the largest and wealthiest in Pompeii, had a kitchen space, or, at least, a space in which 'polluting' activities could take place.[47] It would also appear slaves were not confined to specific areas and

44 Hales (2003) 4
45 D'Ambra (1998) 129.
46 Hales (2003) 124.
47 Mau (1899) 282-291.

would be found assisting and working throughout the house.[48] In its adaptability the Roman household was incredibly successful as it could fulfil the needs of all of those using it in varying amounts of space.

Although some areas may have been more private than others at certain times, for example those used as bedrooms, it seems unlikely that any were exclusively for the family. The most public areas of the house open to all guests were probably demarcated by the use of décor but the other areas, although sometimes less lavishly decorated,[49] could be used to receive the most important and intimate guests. The more significant visitors would be invited into the least public rooms of the house and this not only provided greater privacy but also signalled a more intimate relationship with the paterfamilias.[50] In this way the large number of guests in the house could be segregated and regulated according to their status. Although it cannot be traced in the archaeological record very successfully, it is also likely, based on the evidence of some paintings, that tapestries and furniture could be employed to divide space and perhaps create more intimate settings for specific guests, adding further possibilities for use to these areas.[51]

The luxury rural and coastal villas and suburban homes of the elite were designed to be residences par excellence. The owners of such homes also had town houses from which they could conduct business and public life, or *negotium*. These retreats were designed to be a residential escape from public life. In theory they were the 'antithesis to the *domus'* and here the owner was

48 For example Trimalchio's feast has slaves in constant attendance in the dining room and they appear throughout the house.
49 Hales (2003) 36 & 143.
50 Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 17.
51 D'Ambra (1998) 129.

free from defining his *Romanitas*[52] but this was never strictly the case due to the large numbers of guests they would receive; the social pressures of the city were basically extended to the rural retreats.[53] In fact the functions of the two types of residence were so similar that Vitruvius prescribes the same rules for planning homes in the country as for planning a *domus* in the town in his architectural treatise.[54] The remove from the towns allowed the owners a little more licence in the décor and design but the same basic functions had to be met and so we again see many rooms that could have been multifunctional and often more than one room used frequently for the same purpose. The key element was undoubtedly flexibility and so one room may be used for dining in the summer but another room may be better suited to the same function in the winter. So homes needed portable furniture and fittings, which supports the idea they may have used tapestries and fabrics often, and the few remains of furniture we have do seem to have been designed with portability in mind. As time progressed the idea of the luxury villa became so popular throughout Roman society that we see houses of modest means attempting to replicate certain features, the most striking of these, the garden will be discussed later. Many architectural elements were also borrowed from the villas with the result that houses lost any order and became a 'hodge-podge' of villa features packed into a small space.[55]

52 Hales (2003) 32-35.
53 Wallace-Hadrill (1994) 5.
54 Vitr. De arch. 6.5.2.
55 Clarke (2001) 23.

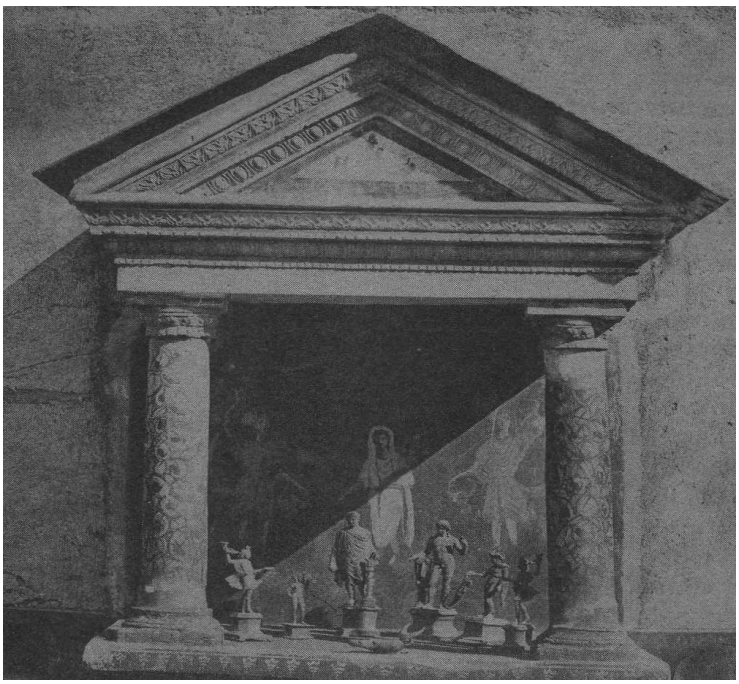


Fig. 4. Lararium from the House of Menander.

We know relatively little of the housing of the lowest classes. Vitruvius states there was no need for entertaining spaces in such houses[56] and the archaeology at Pompeii and Herculaneum has revealed some small houses. They, often, still have an atrium with the other rooms tightly packed around, although some houses were broken into workshop spaces and apartments. For example the House in Opus Craticium at Herculaneum contains two apartments and a shop with workrooms all in the space of one small house.[57] The need for flexibility, therefore, seems present regardless of social station, it is the need for elaborate display spaces that is less prevalent in the poorest of the houses.

Religion

Roman religion pervaded all aspects of life and the household was by no means exempt. The practice of the correct religious rituals within the home provided an opportunity for the family to show their adherence to tradition and social

56 Vitr. Arch. 6.5.1.
57 Clarke (2001) 25-26.

norms and thus to enhance and protect their own social position.

There were several religious practices common in the home. Some we, today, would not necessarily conduct within the home, such as rituals of marriage, coming-of-age, birth and death; our literary sources provide details on the ceremonies surrounding these events and it is clear they were intrinsically linked to the home and the family and had a religious nature.[58] Obviously these are occasional events and so the do not reveal much specifically about the presence of religion in the home on an everyday basis but they do show the home could be a sacred place at times and therefore we see the Roman distinction between religious and secular was not so clear as our own.

The most common form of household worship was that of the lares, penates and genius. Each house had a *lararium*, which could vary from elegant shrines to simple shelves in kitchens.[59] These household gods were considered highly important and were regularly worshipped. There is no doubt these *lararia* are evidence of religious worship within the household.[60] Similarly, but with less surviving evidence, various gods related to everyday living would be worshipped within the home, offerings would be made to them in the hearth, like they had been to lares and penates in earlier times before each house had a lararium. Offerings might include perfume, wine, and cakes.[61] Later the lares and penates received similar offerings but at the *lararium* instead. Often *lararia* also contain images of other gods, presumably those most important to the family and there might also be additional shrines in the home. Fig. 4. shows a

58 Clarke (1991) 1.
59 At Pompeii there is substantial evidence for shrines to the lares usually decorated in paint or mosaic or built in stone. For an example of a kitchen shrine see the House of the Faun.
60 Kaufmann-Heinimann (2007) 201.
61 Clarke (2001) 7.

lararium crammed with bronze figures of the lares and additional divinities. The divinities worshipped in the household vary considerably but often include Venus, Mercury and other major divinities. In many cases the lararium and shrines were placed in prominent places like the atrium so they could easily be viewed by guests and, often, also by passers by. It was incredibly important that those wishing to be fully involved in Roman society show some reverence for religious practices as religion was an integral part of the social order; in fact many offices of state were based around religion, and so all wishing to have some social standing were required to participate in this aspect of life.

Further religious practice within the home with regards to décor and statuary has been much debated. The Roman home was often filled with paintings, mosaics and carved images, often images of mythical or divine subjects. Whether these are purely decorative or not has been the subject of much discussion and will be investigated in Chapter 4.

Public Life

The Roman household was not only a place for private activities; it was very much a space in which many aspects of social and political life took place, so much so that it has been suggested that the home provided each man with a personal forum.[62] The status of a man was literally measured and reflected by the size of his house and the number of guests it contained.[63] One of the most significant and regular of the public events that allowed him to demonstrate his importance was the morning *salutatio* at which clients, including subordinate family members, slaves, freedmen, employees and extra individuals looking for

62 Hales (2003) 1.
63 D'Ambra (1998) 40.

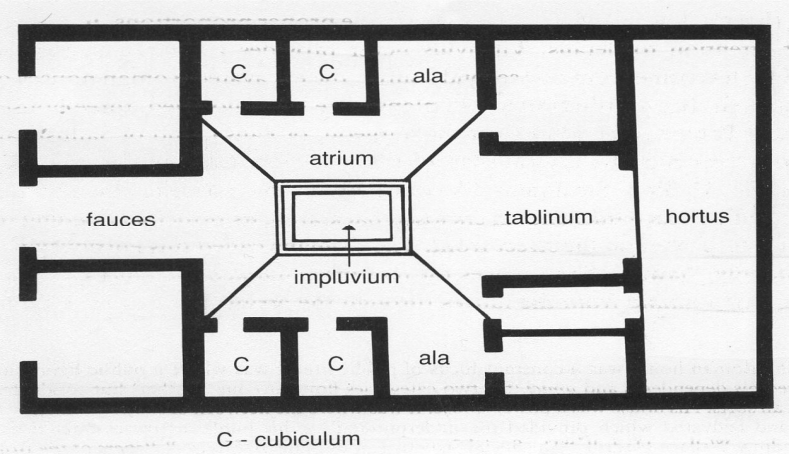


Fig. 5. Plan of an ideal Roman house.

security,[64] would gather at the patron's house to pay their respects. It was important both that this activity could be viewed from the outside and that those inside were able to view the most important features of the house.[65] For this reason most houses were based around an axis which, when the door was open, could allow passers by to see through most of the house either to the garden or the *triclinium.* Thus during the *salutatio* they could see large numbers of people and at other times of day they could see the areas in which important business was conducted; the axis also meant the view was symbolic, usually the *paterfamilias* would be seated at the end of the axis view to emphasise his power through a set of architectural frames.[66] For those within the house the atrium and garden would usually hold most of the décor and decorative objects as well as family heirlooms, ancestor masks and portrait busts.

The normal day to day activities of the *domus* would in fact be obscured from sight for those outside as they took place either side of the central line of vision that had been carefully constructed. Fig. 5, representing the prescribed ideal for a house, shows this central axis with rooms and space for household activities obscured from view. Fig. 6. shows how this worked in reality from the *fauces*. There was also an expectation of regular dining and entertaining in most

64 Clarke (2001) 4.
65 D'Ambra (1998) 40
66 Clarke (2001) 4-5.

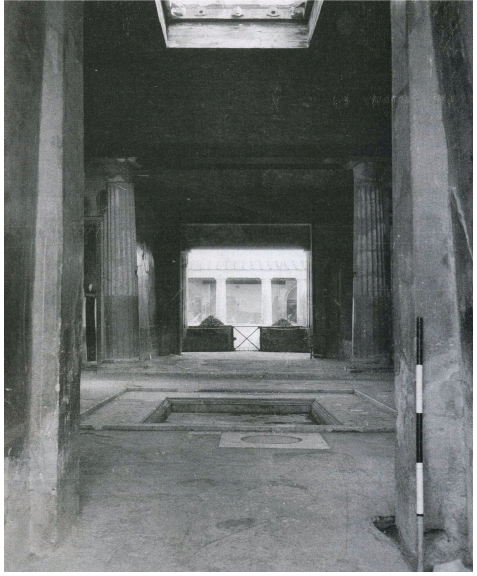


Fig. 6. View of the central axis of the House of Menander

Roman homes and, therefore, most days the house would be a hive of activity with people constantly coming and going and the family and their belongings (or at least those they wanted to be seen) constantly on display. A comment from Velleius Paterculus essentially sums up this mindset and highlights just how public elite households were, ideally, to be;

> Apply your skills to arranging my house so that whatever I do I should be visible to everybody.[67]

The need for public access affected the design of the house and large halls and accessible rooms were necessary to accommodate this. Despite the flexibility some rooms were very clearly marked as being public areas through their décor. The décor of the walls and floors in these main reception rooms was usually the grandest within the home. The style and medium of decoration alone could say much about the taste and wealth of the owner and the subject matter could be used to say much more. Mythological scenes could be used to show education and class and often the themes were selected either to draw a parallel with the owner or to show a specific message or moral tale demonstrating the owner's achievements and beliefs as well as showing their intelligence through literary

67 Vell.Pat. 2.14.3.

references. In fact, some areas were so intertwined with the public realm that they were decorated with architectural elements in the style of a forum or theatre or other grand public building expressing the power and political aspirations of the owner.[68]

Roman homes frequently displayed their family heritage through funerary masks and busts and likewise showed allegiance to the empire through images of the emperor. These figures often took pride of place within the most public parts of the home and provided ample opportunity for the family not only to demonstrate their value of tradition but also to highlight their own and their family's personal achievements. Fig.7 shows an ancestor shrine. This was a particularly effective form of displaying R*omanitas* for those with a long Roman ancestry. This reverence for ancestors was often linked to the worship of the genius, the spirit of the paterfamilias, and we sometimes see shrines and cult practices built around what has become known as the cult of the ancestors. This demonstrates the ease with which the Romans could combine socio-political display with religion within the home and reminds us how flexible and undefined the spaces and practices within the home could be. The cult of the ancestors acted as a display of the family's achievements and was supposed to inspire *virtus* and loyalty in others.

Today we would consider many areas of a Roman house to be public in the sense they are open to people outside the household and a much wider range of

68 D'Ambra (1998) 130.

Fig. 7. Ancestor Shrine

people than we invite into modern homes but there has been debate over just how open Roman homes were and here the sources seem to conflict slightly. We have many writers that praise the openness of certain homes[69] and it was obviously considered the mark of a good public servant to run an open house, yet we also have sources referring to doormen regulating the comings and goings through the house.[70] There were also many houses with mosaics of guard dogs at doors (Fig.8). Hales argues that the norm was in fact to allow admission to the house on an invitation only basis and events such as the *salutatio* we attended by a regular audience not random members of the public. Obviously there was still this ideal of the open house and the fact that it is praised so much suggests it probably was not commonplace. Rather it was highlighted by writers as something to aspire to as there would be little need to discuss it so emphatically if it was already in place in most households.[71] This argument is promising. A house can still be public and open with regulation of those that enter; further to this different areas of the house would be available

69 See for example Velleius quote above or Vitr. De Arch. 6.5.2. where it is highlighted that open space is needed to meet social obligations

70 Fronto. Ep. 5.1. As quoted in Hales (2003) 37.

71 Hales (2003) 37

Fig. 8. Mosaic guard dog at the House of Paquius.

to different levels of the public, for example the atrium would be open to all but rooms further into the house might be used as dining rooms for specific guests or reception rooms for men of equal social standing or intimate friends.

The importance of public areas within the home is emphasised by Vitruvius whose primary aim in Book Six of *De architectura* is to define the types of houses and rooms each section of the social strata should build; this focuses very much on the middle and upper classes. He argues that the more elite and involved in politics the man the more numerous and large his reception rooms should be. Further to this he says the elite need libraries, picture galleries and basilicas and all of these should be styled like great public buildings, and we have seen this was put into practice.[72] Vitruvius' ideas obviously link wealth and social standing to accepting guests and suggest it is essential for men of ambition or high status to have areas in which to receive guests and entertain. Presumably the more important or wealthy the individual the more numerous these guests should be. His argument in a practical way says men of such high

72 Vitr. De Arch. 6.5.2.

social standing often use their houses for private law suits and meetings with arbitrators and since these events are so similar to those of important public buildings they should have a suitable setting.[73] So it is a combination of entertainment, social status and function that justify the grand houses of the elite in the Roman world.

The man and his *domus* were so intimately connected in the Roman mind that the house could symbolise the man in his absence. This explains the importance of retaining a town house even for those who spend very little time there and have several other properties. It also explains why upon exile a man's property would be confiscated and in extreme circumstances destroyed; if the house is no longer in Rome the man can no longer have a presence there. [74]

As discussed above villas were initially very much considered areas for private relaxation but this often involved entertaining friends and guests; and so the villa most definitely had a public aspect to it from the beginning. Since they were areas of relaxation the villas made ideal locations for entertaining and pursuing leisure activities which can have very public associations. Firstly when entertaining, as in a town house, ample opportunity is present to impress upon the guest any image the owner wishes and in Roman society, more often than not, they wished to emphasise their education, refinement and wealth. The primary difference was that in a villa the need to express Roman traditions was less prevalent and therefore we see more Greek influences not only in the themes of decoration but also in the choice of leisure activities. Certain Roman standards and ideals still needed to be maintained, however, and the owner

73 Vitr. De Arch. 6.5.2.
74 Hales (2003) 49-51.

would be sure to remain within certain boundaries as the law courts and literature were full of criticisms of men who were seen to cross these boundaries and act in an un-Roman manner. So we see villas abounding with decoration and design surely to affect and impress visitors rather than the owner himself whilst also revealing much about the owner and his perceived place in society to the guests. As the years progressed the need to keep Greek admiration from the public eye diminished and the villas not only became increasingly elaborate but also provided the model for many town houses also, particularly in nearby areas such as Pompeii.[75]

Gardens

Although very much a part of the Roman household and subject to all of the issues outlined above I feel it is necessary to give gardens a little more attention, firstly because of their prominence within Roman homes and secondly because of their particular relevance when studying objects of a Dionysiac nature. This is where the vast majority of Dionysiac objects with known find spots have been excavated. From the material remains we know that the vast majority of Roman houses had gardens; these range dramatically from small square yards with images of plants and a couple of borders to lavish suburban *horti*, such as the Horti Tauriani which covered thirty six hectares. The fact that, regardless of space, a garden seemed an essential feature of every house suggests importance was attributed to them in the ideal Roman design and, therefore, we may conjecture they held some significant function.

75 In fact Zanker (1998) 193. claims it is unambiguously clear all owners wished to create the illusion of a villa.

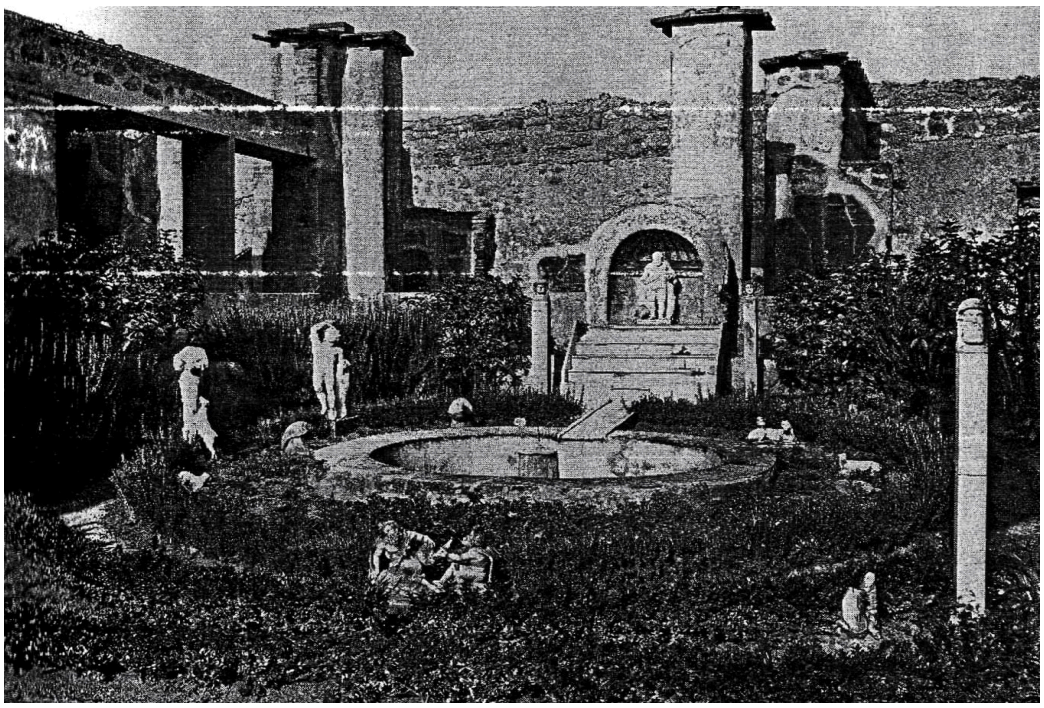


Fig. 9. Garden of the House of Marcus Lucretius.

Throughout the Roman empire villa gardens were based upon Greek styles and in turn those created at villas influenced others. We therefore see many examples of villa decoration and architecture incorporated into the gardens at Pompeii. Size was an irrelevant factor, owners had no qualms about miniaturizing architectural elements and thus removing their function or cutting the bottom half from a herm to make it fit.[76] This use of limited areas does, however, provide us with some ingenious plans and uses of space. For example in the House of the Black Anchor they were attempting to build a two storey peristyle alongside a house of modest means.[77] The fact that even modest houses, such as this, were willing to invest considerable sums of money in ensuring the garden was one of the most impressive features shows how important emulating the elites, in this way, was for an aspiring citizen. Zanker has said the aim of such gardens was to demonstrate the household could afford

76 Zanker (1998) 163.
77 Zanker (1998) 160.

the very best or at least a picture of it.[78] This accounts for both the use of paintings to extend the impression of the garden and gardens that were not necessarily grand but gave an impressive image, especially those viewed from the open front door. The House of Marcus Lucretius provides an excellent example of this type of garden design; the garden was set on higher level than the street and so from the entrance must have appeared like a stage set with sculptural pieces.[79]

Within the home the garden could have several functions, firstly, and most basically, it could be used for planting, and many, even those with vast ornamentation, appear to have contained some form of functional vegetable or herb garden; in this respect they were a vital aspect of the household economy.[80] They also provided areas of light and opportunities to collect water. Often, and perhaps more significantly, they were used as areas for meeting and entertaining guests and were therefore also areas of display and ornamentation. In this respect they functioned in a very similar way to the most public rooms of the house; they were areas in which the owner could show his wealth and display his R*omanitas* to outsiders. For this reason the themes displayed within garden sculpture are as significant as those used to decorate the main rooms of the house, although they have received considerably less attention. As these garden displays were so important they were often positioned to face the main rooms of the house, as is the case at the House of Marcus Lucretius, suggesting these rooms looked directly onto the gardens[81] and thus garden decoration could be used not only to embellish a peristyle but also the rooms around it.

78 Zanker (1998) 200.
79 Zanker (1998) 174.
80 Ciarollo (2001) provides an extensive discussion of the different plants found within gardens at Pompeii and examines domestic gardens in Roman world in a general sense.
81 Farrar (1998) 99.

Larger gardens could obviously employ much more elaborate and thematic displays, for example the villa at Oplontis had a pathway lined with herms[82] and Hadrian's villa at Tivoli had sculptural assemblages reflecting different cultural influences.[83] Thus a variety of different effects on the viewer could be created based on the individual patron's wishes; this provided the elite with more opportunities to develop meaningful and intellectual displays as well as eye-catching ones.

The garden as a part of nature could also speak symbolically about the *paterfamilias*. The gardens brought the wildness of nature into the confines of the home and often the city and with this came connotations of chaos. As tamer of nature with landscaping, waterworks, border planting and separation (usually with a peristyle) from the rest of the house the paterfamilias proved himself to be rational and powerful. These attributes when combined with the sophistication, education and ancestry shown throughout the rest of the home could suggest to peers that here they had a man capable of exerting the same qualities in political office.[84] In the control of nature the home-owner wished to take some control of his self-representation and potentially his career.

An important feature in most gardens was water, not only was it an expensive commodity in some areas (in towns it could be taxed)[85] but it also showed a further mastery over the elements the ultimate symbol of status and *Romanitas*. Most houses with gardens also had a water feature and like the gardens themselves these could range considerably from small pools to elaborate canals

82 Farrar (1998) 101.
83 MacDonald & Pinto (1995) 141-148.
84 Hales (2003) 162.
85 Farrar (1998) 22-23.

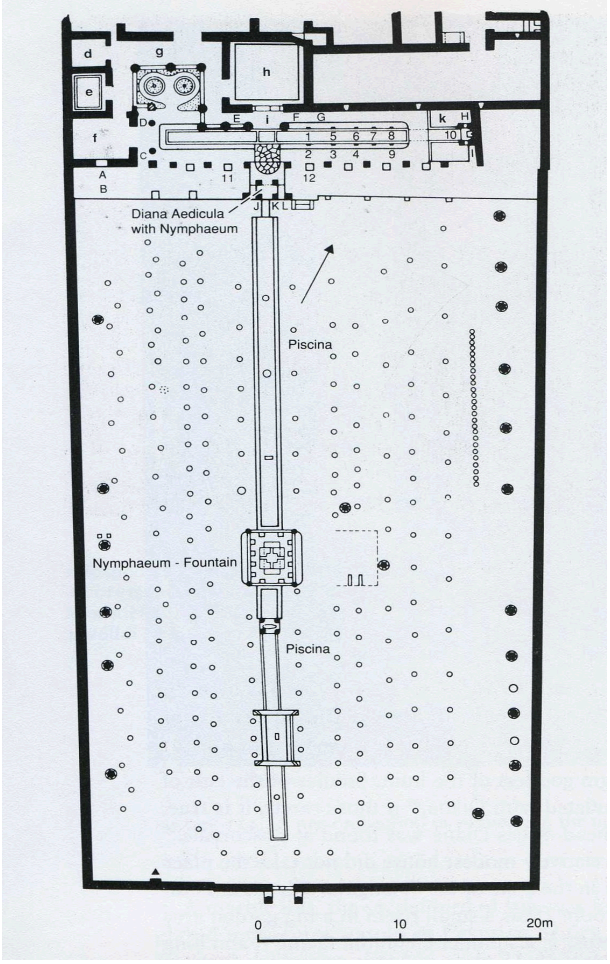


Fig. 10. Plan of the garden of the House of Octavius Quarto

and fountains with jets. Water was also frequently combined with sculpture to further elaborate a particular theme or idea. The House of Meleager, for example, had a fountain painted blue to reflect the water, a pool with a jet and a further smaller fountain at the other end of the pool.[86] The House of the Golden Cupids, on the other hand, despite being a small garden, had a very large pool with a sculpture on the rim and was surrounded by a walk way that was dotted with further small sculptures and so provided a a central feature to guide the viewer around the garden.[87] For an example of an extremely lavish use of water we can turn to the House of Octavius Quartio. Here we have an incredibly long canal with a nymphaeum, a fountain and two piscinae, as well as a large sculptural assemblage.[88]

86 Jashemsk (1979) 33.
87 Zanker (1998) 168.
88 Clarke (2001) 193-207.

Summary

The Roman house was a vital part of Roman society; it not only provided a residential space and the basis for the family unit, which, in turn, provided the basis for most of the social organisation of Rome, but also provided a multifunctional space for the social and religious aspects of the family's life. The *domus* and villa were used as show cases for the family's achievements and merits, both past and present, and more than anything demonstrated conformity to the ideals and traditions of society. In a society as socially mobile and competitive as that of the Romans it was essential citizens show these attributes clearly to their peers and in turn they could perhaps hope for social advancement or at least to maintain their position. The competitive nature of society also led to much emulation along the class scale with those lower down hoping to further their career and appear wealthy by following the styles propagated by the elites, although often they had to fashion them from a cheaper medium.

The design and décor also mirrored the multifunctional nature of these houses. Many were laid out to allow a number of visitors to gather for the morning *salutatio* and other events whilst other rooms allowed more intimate gatherings of associates. Décor was planned to emphasise the best traits of the family and display them to the largest number of people possible, for this reason decoration is often most elaborate in the largest areas of the house. Overall houses were usually designed to show the most embellished feature of their design, more often than not, the garden from ideal vantage points and like the rest of the house the garden was a canvass for the owner to show his ideals, education and *Romanitas* to the outside world.

Ultimately the Roman house provides a unique insight into ways in which Romans presented themselves to their peers, it provided many opportunities for social interaction and display and socially competitive Romans used each of these to their full advantage showcasing everything from ancestry to military achievements to knowledge of Greek culture. Even the rural and suburban villas were unbridled opportunities to show learning and sophistication to closer acquaintances.

Although the house itself can tell us much about Roman self-promotion it is only by studying the choice of themes and styles for the objects within that we can actually gain a deep insight into what exactly these home-owners wanted society to think of them and it is this we turn to in the next chapter.

Dionysos and Retrospection in Roman Society:

Some Questions of Subject and Style

Dionysos was one of the most visible gods in the Roman world, primarily because of his popularity in domestic and rural settings. His retinue or thiasos were just as prevalent and are found adorning many items from large scale sculpture and fountains to candelabra and table legs. Images are also found spread across the empire suggesting this was a god with far reaching appeal. This abundance of imagery of this type leads us to question why this god and his followers were so popular with the Roman people and why the significance seems to be more relevant in the domestic sphere.

Dionysos in the Roman World

Dionysos was a god with many guises in the Roman world, also know by the name of Bacchus. He was very popular and held sway over many important aspects of everyday life particularly those concerning the private sphere. His worship was adopted early in Southern Italy[89] where there were many Greek colonies and therefore the areas around Vesuvius provide us with many examples of depictions of him and some clues to his worship. Near Pompeii he had a temple set in a vineyard, fitting for the god of the vine in a grape producing region and this provides us with evidence of his ongoing worship in the region.[90] His popularity throughout the Roman world may be attributed to the fact 'the vine gained astonishing and unprecedented importance in the economy, mind and spirit of the Italians.'[91]

89 Jashemsk (1979) 123.
90 Jashemsk (1979) 124.
91 Hyams (1965) 97.

Dionysos was not merely a presence in agricultural regions, he was depicted in households and possibly worshipped there also. Dionysiac mysteries were a very popular form of religion concerned with recreating the freedom of the bacchic life, so much so that the authorities felt the need to outlaw them in 185 B.C., although evidence suggests they were unsuccessful in doing so and in areas like Pompeii worship was still flourishing in 1st Century B.C.[92] Evidence for the actual practices of these rites are slim but there are some key depictions that provide an insight into the religion such as the infamous frescoes at the Villa of the Mysteries. It is thought much of the Dionysiac mystery rites took place in the home as there are several homes with rooms decorated with images that appear to reflect the initiation rites and it has been suggested, therefore, that these were rooms in which such rites may have taken place. The fact that worshipping Dionysos was also outlawed further suggests the best place for conducting such rituals would be within the home and presumably these would be rooms into which only initiates of the cult would be admitted. Although the precise meanings and events of such paintings has been debated for many years it certainly seems that initiation involved some form of torment and the unveiling of a sacred object, most likely a phallus. Reasons for the popularity of the cult have also led to much discussion; the prospect of redemption and aid after death was no doubt a factor, as Seaford highlights, but initiation into such a cult 'secures the fate of the initiated in this world and the next.'[93] Also significant is the aspect of being involved in a closed community: in a competitive society being bound to various people through cult activities must have had its advantages in terms of politics and economics and Seaford further suggests that the participation in a community would be especially appealing to

92 Hyams (1965) 100.
93 Seaford (1981) 55.

those with less of a function in the wider society; women for example, who would find a sense of participation and belonging.[94] In addition it has been highlighted that it was also a cult associated with pleasure and hedonism and the appeals of this especially for an elite bound to conservatism and traditions by social convention must have been great.

Dionysos was inextricably linked with his thiasos, so much so that his presence could be suggested by their depiction alone. This thiasos consisted of a whole range of followers; nymphs, maenads, satyrs, silenoi, centaurs as well as other gods that came to be closely associated with him, Pan, Priapus and Liber Pater among them. Images of any of these associates were enough to suggest a world of bucolic pleasure, ecstasy and wildness and the Romans played heavily upon these themes in public spaces but even more so in domestic ones.

Dionysiac Imagery

Dionysiac imagery has great relevance to a study of Romans and their interaction with art for two reasons; it is found in a wide variety of domestic contexts and therefore allows us to study the use of images in the domestic realm in a general sense; it is often presented in a wide variety of retrospective styles allowing the study of stylistic choices and ideals as well as choices in motif or theme.

Images of Dionysos and his thiasos did not come to the Romans from the Greeks alone: he is identified with several local Latin gods and the Etruscan god of wine, Flunfus. The Etruscans also had much contact with Greek images.

94 Seaford (1981) 56.

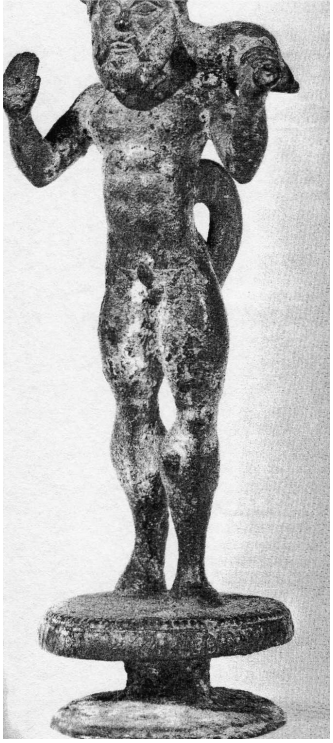


Fig. 11. The Etruscan god Flunfus.

If we look at Fig.11. we clearly see a relationship between portrayals of Flunfus and those of satyrs. Therefore although our focus here is on the influence of Greek styles upon Roman images of him we must bear in mind that the styles may be affected by other cultural exchanges too. As we have seen the Roman appropriation and emulation of retrospective styles was not simple copying and therefore we cannot expect simple uses of the styles.

Dionysos is one of a handful of gods regularly represented in an archaic manner. This archaism is never truly archaic and Hellenistic and Roman influences are found in the pieces. It is a variant that encompasses archaic features such as patterning. It is thought that archaic representations link the god with original rustic forms of the cult and play heavily upon his fertility role, especially after his merge with Liber Pater in the Roman age. Representing a god in this way also adds tradition, reverence and authority.

There are many archaistic statues of Dionysos and Fullerton has broken them

Fig. 12. Archaistic Dionysos.

down into types suggesting some were based on a Rhodian style while others are more 'Attic' in style, primarily the style of mainland Greece, although he notes they were primarily produced by the Romans. Unfortunately few of these full size statues have precise find spots, which can be problematic when interpreting them. Fig. 12. provides a typical example of the formal pose and patterned drapery many of these have. It also shows the most common archaistic feature in representations of Dionysos, his facial hair. Here it is highly patterned, regular and lacks naturalism, which is typical in many depictions of the god. We do have more contexts for the archaistic herms and reliefs, however, and these will be dealt with in turn. The bronze bust of Dionysos or Priapus from the Villa of the Papyri was apparently once described

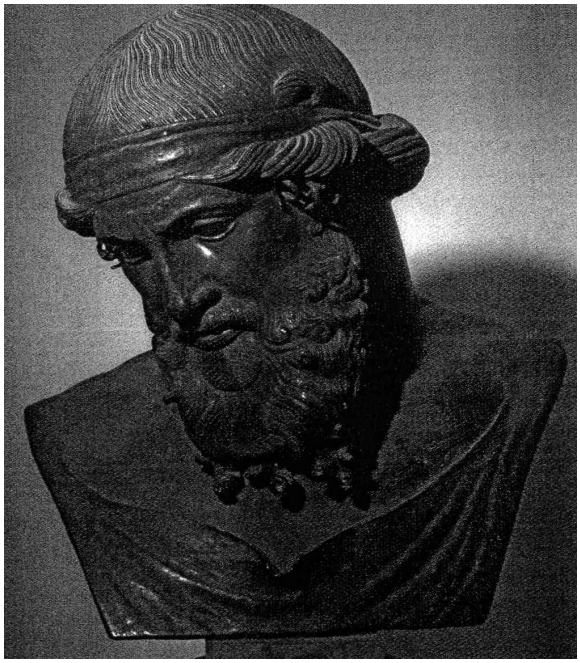


Fig. 13. Bust of Dionysos/Priapus.

by Winkelmann as one of the most 'perfect pieces in the whole world.'[95] It was found in the corridor from the courtyard to the garden and therefore we can presume it was linked to the outdoors and beautifully combines archaistic and early classical features. The identification is debated but both Dionysos and Priapus would be suited to such a location and appearance.[96] It is generally thought that the bust may have been copied from a larger full size statue and if this is the case it provides us with an example of Roman adaptation.[97]

This archaic style also often presents itself in the form of herms, common garden ornaments across the social range. These herms can be single or double headed, those with double heads often depict Ariadne or another member of the Dionysiac entourage. They generally appear to have had similar functions to full archaic sculptures and the form leant itself easily to such a traditional, static

95 As quoted in Mattusch (2005) 284.
96 Mattusch (2005) 283-285.
97 Mattusch (2005) 285.

and stylistic form of representation. One such herm head from Pompeii shows the beard to be so rigid and patterned that it is essentially just rectangular only the leaves add a naturalistic touch to this head and help with the identification. Other herms include those from the House of the Vettii and the House of the Golden Cupids; in both cases we also find formalism in the presentation of hair, symmetrical faces and a fixed gaze.

Classical styles were also common in representations of Dionysos and the thiasos. In classical art the mature, stocky Dionysos had given way to a youthful, svelte perception and this is the Dionysos we see in many representations in the Roman household, not just in sculpture but in paintings and frescoes too.[98] The classical styles were always

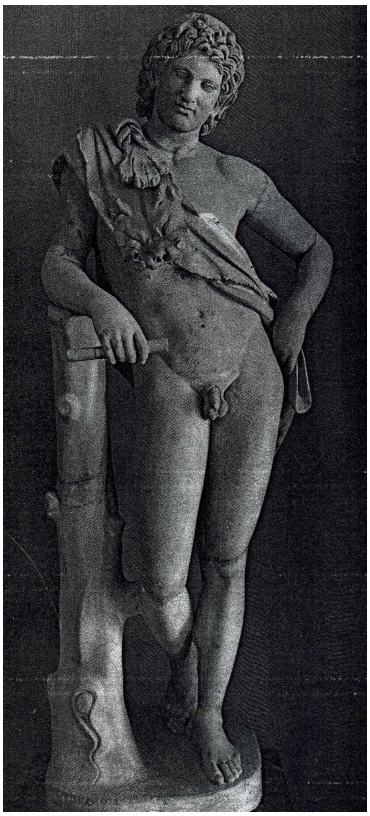


Fig. 14. Resting Satyr torso.

Fig. 15. Resting Satyr.

98 See Carpenter (1997) especially Chapter 6 for a discussion of the changing appearance of Dionysos at this time.

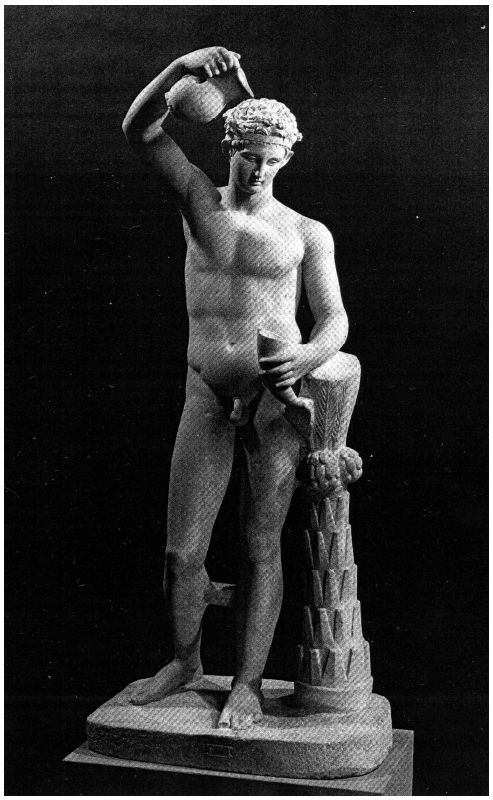


Fig. 16. Pouring Satyr.

very much associated with grace and dignity for the Romans and an apt way to portray a god. These classical images also connect to the more hedonistic and less rural aspects of the god's character perhaps making it a more suitable style for his cult and followers.

One of the most popular of types throughout the Roman era and empire was the Resting Satyr, there are more than one hundred versions in a variety of sizes and media. It is said to be based on an original by Praxiteles but, as discussed, it is unlikely this was the reason for its popularity; we must also take into account the popular subject matter and the aesthetics of the piece.[99] One statuette of this type was discovered at Terracina in an area of coastal villas, it is in a

99 Bartman (1992) 51.

fragmentary state (see Fig. 15. for complete figure) but even so is one of the finest replicas, which may relate to the wealth of the inhabitants of the area.[100] Although we do not have a precise find spot for this figure we can presume he belonged to one of the villas and in keeping with typical settings for this figure may well have belonged in a garden. The grace and personality of this figure are evident and it embodies Dionysiac depictions in the classical style showing a composure that is still brimming with life and contains a sense of movement, albeit a subtle one. In this case the sense of movement is provided in counter rhythms in the pose and drapery allowing the figure to be at rest while indicating a sense of activity.[101] In this sense it provides the middle ground between the static archaic styles and the lively Hellenistic features. Yet another fine example of a classicizing satyr comes from the villa at Monte Calvo Sabina. This figure has again been associated with Praxiteles, but there are so many Pouring Satyrs we have no reason to presume Praxiteles' original was this type. In this figure we can see again grace and a sense of movement but in a controlled and serene manner.[102]

Dionysos himself is also represented in the Classical style, for example in the small bronze though to have fallen from an upper storey at House 7.12.17. at Pompeii. There are several replicas of this bronze suggesting some popularity in the Roman world and it includes Praxitelean and Lysippan elements in its design.[103] A more political figure is that of Antinous as Dionysos in a strikingly powerful Lysippan pose, this statue is now in the NY Carlsberg Glyptothek but was originally found in a villa garden, an appropriate setting for the subject

100 Bartman (1992) 101-102.
101 Bartman (1992) 52-53.
102 Schlesier & Schwarzmaier (2008) 189.
103 Dwyer (1982) 53-54.

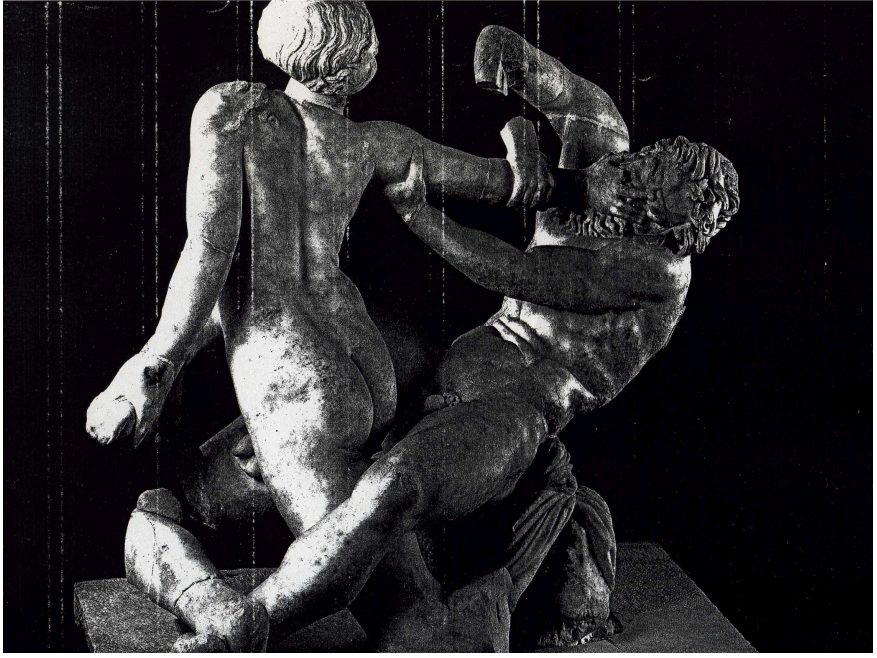


Fig. 17. Satyr and Hermaphrodite

matter. This statue demonstrates the Roman ability to appropriate forms and put them to use with their own meanings.

Hellenistic styles although used in representations of Dionysos himself were apparently thought of as particularly apt for his followers, the looser mannerisms of the style allowing Roman artists to suggest wildness and abandon in the figures as well as making them more light hearted and jovial scenes. These styles were also especially appropriate for use in the garden and fountain sculpture. Hellenistic styles brought a certain life to the figures through dynamic poses and elaborate designs and the level of drama and theatricality this brought was especially effective in Roman gardens that were often effectively used as stages. The Satyr and Hermaphrodite group found at the Villa of Poppea typifies the Roman approach to Hellenistic styles. Hellenistic figures also bring a high level of interaction with the viewer because of their unusual poses which break out of the traditional space and the need of viewer to consider the object from all angles to truly appreciate it and often to uncover its meaning through something playfully hidden in the composition.

Fig. 18. Satyr and Hermaphrodite in wall painting

This is very true of the Satyr and Hermaphrodite composition (Fig.17); at the villa it was installed at the end of a pool, which firstly draws immediate attention to an already striking composition and adds a touch of drama to the setting. The placement at the end of a pool also allowed the viewer access to the sculpture from different angles, essential with a piece such as this are the genitals of the Hermaphrodite since they can only be viewed from a specific angle.[104] The theatricality of the piece is further intensified as this type is known to have been used in theatres also, in fact, a theatre in Daphne had two copies displayed as a pendant (parallel images usually mirroring one another).[105] The popularity of this type is further attested by its presence in domestic paintings (Fig.18) and the fact we have many replicas. Their thought-provoking and playful nature makes these objects ideal for areas such as

104 Mattusch (2008) 202.
105 See Retzleff (2007) for a discussion of this type as theatre sculpture.

Fig. 19. Satyr from the House of the Faun

gardens designed for leisure and browsing of the subject matter and also ideal for encouraging viewers to think and interact and ultimately to question the purpose of the decorative program and to identify the message of the patron.

The statuette of the Dancing Satyr (Fig.19) which provides the house of the faun with it's name typifies the rococo element of Hellenistic decoration.[106] The animated form and carefree attitude as well as its highly decorative nature place this object within a group of works loved or their playful and jovial character. It is possible this work was actually imported from Alexandria and therefore it comes from one of the eminent centres of Hellenistic art production.[107] This would also suggest a certain level of expense would be attached to the item and therefore its prominent display in the atrium of the house is unsurprising.

106 The term 'rococo' has been described by Pollitt (1986) 127. as a 'scholar's junk bin' due to the vast array of works included under the heading. I agree the term in many cases is problematic but here I take it simply to mean works of a playful nature, in a similar manner to sculptures of children and Eros also labelled in this way.

107 DeCaro (1996) Fig. 204.

Fig. 20. Krater depicting Dionysos.

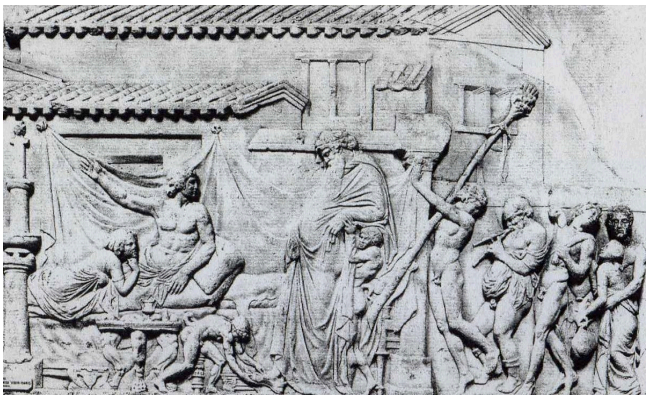


Fig. 21. 'Visit to Ikiaros' Relief

In addition to free-standing sculpture the Dionysiac thiasos were also frequently rendered in sculptural relief, neo-attic relief to be precise. How much these reliefs have to do with Athens has been much debated and it in fact seems more likely they were entirely Roman creations.[108] They were perhaps created using some form of pattern book as we not only see the same compositions repeated, as we have come to expect from Roman art manufacture, but we also see individual figures re-used in other reliefs.

These figures are often thought to be based on or copied from Greek works and this too has sparked much debate, but here it is not relevant as we are interested in discerning Roman use only. It is certainly true, however, that these reliefs do have elements of retrospective styles often fused together as different figures are combined. We, for example, find an image of Dionysos on a marble vase which is clearly based on the same type as a Dionysos on relief (Figs.20 and

108 When using the term 'relief' here I use it in an all-encompassing manner to include decoration on vases, altars and small decorative objects.

Fig. 22. Dancing Meanads on a krater.

21). Even to the untrained eye it is clear that although the settings and other figures differ the Dionysos is a replica.

Many of these reliefs contain Kallimachean maenads these were very popular figures in the Roman world and they are used to decorate a huge array of objects from drinking cups to altars. Like the Dionysos above we have a set number of maenads who are replicated almost exactly time and time again in varying combinations.[109] From the Villa of Q. Voconius Pollio we have several fragments of a relief clearly depicting three maenads and another figure, only represented by his feet but given the context probably a depiction of Dionysos.[110]

Although this is fragmentary we can gain some idea of its original appearance

109 Touchette (1995) 5, here she argues for nine major types with minor variants of them.
110 Richter (1936) 16.

Fig. 23. Dionysiac Procession relief.

by comparison with other reliefs. Garden wall paintings and reliefs found in situ suggest that these panels in the domestic sphere were often incorporated into garden walls or set on top of pillars. In the Villa of Q. Voconius Pollio these specific fragments would have provided a suitable backdrop for a garden full of Dionysiac ornamentation. Another lavish setting for images of the maenads is the Horti of Maecenas the find spot for a krater depicting several of the figures (Fig.22).[111]

A relief from the Villa Quintiliana near Rome shows a different interpretation of a maenad and combines her with a satyr playing the pipes and a young version of the god Dionysos himself. There are other versions of this relief, including one found at Herculaneum which still has traces of the brightly painted decoration on it. The figures on this panel are in a classical tradition although it is unlikely they are actually from the classical period.

Neo-attic workshops also provided Roman gardens with their oscilla, round

111 Touchette (1995) 83.

hanging plaques, which were incredibly popular and are found in large numbers in the gardens of Pompeii as well as other areas. They were originally based on military shields which the Greeks used as decoration but eventually they lost this meaning and more Roman interests appear in their decoration.[112] Significantly the decoration on these is also often Dionysiac and includes many of the same figures as the neo-attic relief.

Summary

Depictions of Dionysos were incredibly popular throughout the Roman world as was his cult. The wide range of styles used in depictions of not only Dionysos but also his retinue may indicate to us different functions for these domestic images. The many representations of Dionysiac figures illustrate several features of the Roman art market. We can see that although some figures have been linked with Greek masterpieces these links are often tenuous and do not necessarily account for their popularity nor do they enhance our understanding of the objects themselves. In fact, the large number of objects not associated in such a way strongly suggests collectors had other priorities when selecting objects. The Dionysiac pieces also reveal the extent to which repetition and emulation took place with many of the types found in other examples and some, like the Resting Satyr, existing in over one hundred versions. This implies that these types were functioning as an indicator of Roman culture and taste, surely something that still had such a fundamental Greek message would not have been so widely understood or so popular. The constant repetition of forms cements their place in the artistic canon and fully develops its place in Roman society. Finally we can see the ways in which

112 DeCaro (1996) Fig. 213.

retrospective styles were used to create new eclectic pieces. This is especially evident in the neo-attic reliefs and again the fusion of styles to create a Roman product should suggest the Greek meaning is lost. It also highlights the skill of many Roman sculptors; these are not the clumsy, inaccurate copies some scholars would have us believe. In many cases they are exquisite pieces and more importantly they are fully geared towards the needs of the Roman patron.

Religion in the Household: Illusion or Reality?

The religiosity of domestic sculpture divides opinion amongst scholars: some presume representations within the home to have been purely decorative, whilst others fiercely advocate a deep religious association between depictions and their patrons. The arguments surrounding the religious nature of Dionysiac images follow this divergence. It is therefore necessary, if we wish to fully investigate the possible meanings these retrospective Dionysiac images held for their owners, to examine the debate in this area. It has already been argued that the Greek meanings, associated with the origins of these images, were largely irrelevant once they had been placed into Roman contexts and absorbed by Roman society. Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging in their original forms many of the types and styles used by the Romans had religious settings and this may have influenced the installation of some in Roman temples and public places, it seems unlikely, however, that in their Roman domestic setting such associations remained. Therefore we shall focus solely on religious meanings in Roman society presuming the link between the religious nature of the original and the Roman images is too tenuous to follow, bearing in mind the eclecticism and reworking of the images we have already noted in previous chapters and the removal from original contexts.

Dionysos is undoubtedly one of the more controversial figures to study in relation to domesticity and religion as many of his areas of influence are very much associated with the household and garden. This, along with the abundance of images of him and his retinue, has led some to think his presence must have had a function beyond decorative and often a religious meaning has

Fig. 24. Dionysos statuette from a lararium.

Fig. 25. Dionysos from Britain

been suggested. It is certainly true that in the Roman home worship and ritual took place and it has proved difficult to separate religious and secular space within the household. In fact, it may be the case that the Romans did not differentiate between sacred and laic areas either within the household or in more public arenas such as bath houses and forums. To investigate the nature of Dionysiac religion within the home we must look at two things; we must study some of the more specific contexts within the home to see if some are more sacred than others and we must consider some of the different aspects of the divine to see which, if any, are most applicable to the types of veneration taking place using these Dionysiac objects in the household.

Fig. 26. Lararium painting at Pompeii

Lararia and Altars

The most obvious form of religious veneration in the Roman household took place in the *Lararium.* Here there is not doubt that the figures of the lares, penates and sometimes the genius of the family were held in religious reverence.[113] It is not unusual, however, to find other images and statuettes in such shrines. Some are more common than others, for example Venus and Hercules are often found;[114] significantly for this study of images of Dionysos, or very occasionally his *thiasos*, are also found in such contexts. One such object is the bronze statuette of a young Bacchus with panther found in the lararium of house II, 9, 2 at Pompeii (Fig.24.). Although it is unusual for the god to be depicted so young in such a composition,[115] the retrospective elements beyond this are clear: the pose, with one weight bearing foot advanced

113 There are, of course, debates as to how much this was true religious reverence as opposed to following the norms of society. It is likely that not everyone held the same level of personal veneration towards such shrines and it was very much an expectation that every household have one. For our purposes it is significant that they were spaces with a religious function, it is essentially impossible for us to gauge each patron's individual religious beliefs.

114 See Dwyer (1982) 121-123. for a discussion of the presence of Hercules and Venus in lararia.

115 Varone & dell'Orto (1992) 141.

and a thyrsus as support, combines elements seen throughout the retrospective repertoire and furthermore this type is known to be repeated in several examples including one from as far afield as Britain now housed in the British Museum (Fig.25). Furthermore the high quality of this piece is evident, bronze lavished with silver damascene suggests that this was probably not an insignificant addition to the family lararium. It has been suggested that many pieces found in these shrines were not in fact created for such a purpose.[116] Here the similarities between this piece and images of a lares found throughout Pompeii show it would not have been out of place in such a setting; for example it can be compared with the Dancing Lar from house I, 11, 5. Similarities in base, material and scale imply they could have been produced with similar functions in mind.

With an understanding of the importance of the lares to the everyday family worship it seems difficult to deny any religiosity to similar figures found in the same context.[117] Whether they were worshipped separately or included in the general household rituals is not known but it seems highly unlikely that an individual would select a specific deity, or several, and have them installed in such a way if they held no personal significance for them. Mosaics and paintings decorating lararia could also be considered in such a way and often these feature Dionysos as well. Although they are beyond the remit of this discussion in terms of style and medium they perhaps suggest another element in the worship of Dionysos. In fact, several *lararia*, including one in a *caupona*

116 Dwyer (1982) 121-122. draws attention to the ambiguous nature of such small scale statuettes and later warns of the danger of confusing true religious reverence in lararia with other types of shrines and figures. Although his argument may be valid in cases of objects in other, less certain shrines and sacred areas those found in lararia would be highly inappropriately placed if they were not devotional objects.

117 See Kaufmann-Heinimann (2007) for a discussion of domestic religion.

Fig. 27. Lararium painting.

at Pompeii[118] contain figures of Dionysos similar to the bronze discussed above. This is not technically a domestic space but the inclusion of this image in its shrine demonstrates firstly the popularity of this type of Dionysos and suggests a link between the statuettes in *lararia* and the paintings or mosaics that adorned them. A domestic example comes from the House of the Centenary *lararium*, this time Dionysos is clearly linked to the area and the vine suggesting the worship of him here may have been linked to commercial interests (Fig. 27.).

Another clear sign of religious practice often found in households is the altar. If a statue or statuette were to be found specifically related to such an important religious feature it would suggest that worship of and, perhaps, even sacrifice to the deity in question was taking place.[119] Unfortunately, this is very rarely the case and the specific purposes of such altars are largely unknown. The presence of altars in gardens does, however, attest to religious practices within the home not yet fully understood by modern scholars and it adds weight to the argument that gardens could in fact be very sacred areas. This view is supported by

118 That of Lucius Betutius (Vetutius) Placidus. 1.8.8.

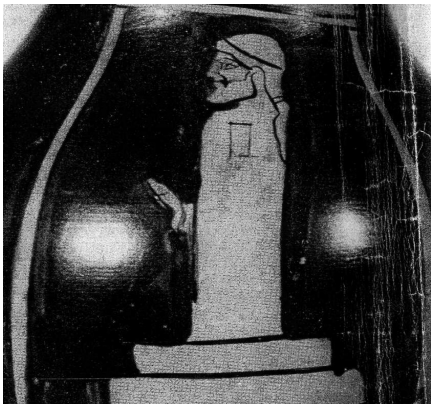
119 Jashemsk (1979) 139.

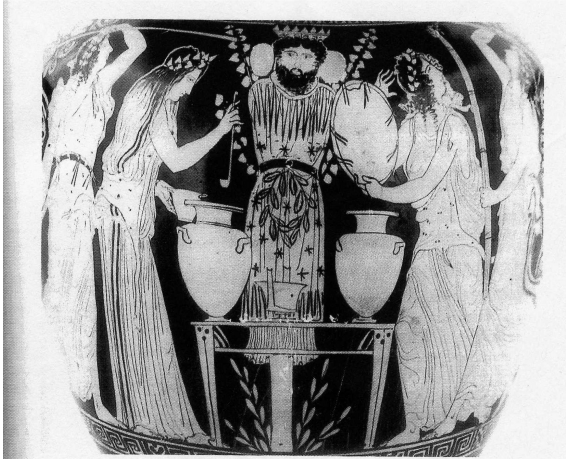
Fig. 28. Priapus fountain at the House of the Vettii

Jashemsk who notes it would be natural for people who spent so much time in their gardens and who relied on the outdoors so much to also worship in their gardens.[120]

The prominence of *lararia,* altars and other shrines within the Roman household attests to the importance of religion in their daily lives, it also suggests that religious practice was something to be admired in fellow citizens and the fact many were so keen to display their devotion indicates everyday religion was not just a individual devotion but had a social and political impact also. This does not negate the religious aspect of such worship but reminds us that in the Roman household things were rarely black and white and many objects and shrines may have held more than one function.

120 Jashemsk (1979) 139.





Figs. 29 & 30. Vases showing rustic cult worship

Rustic Cults

The vast majority of statues with a Dionysiac theme in the household are situated within the garden, which raises the question: was there a specific religious association between these images and gardens? The Dionysiac retinue with their associations of wildness and life without constraint were suitably at home out of doors but did this extend beyond a mere sense of logic to include some greater sacred meaning? With certain associated elements this may well have been the case particularly with those members of the *thiasos* and symbols more closely associated with rustic cults and fertility. Kent-Hill emphasises that Priapus mainly presided over gardens and so this is a suitable place to find him but since this was such an ancient rustic cult it is possible that his presence had much more significance.[121] Unfortunately it is difficult for us to trace the presence of Priapus in most gardens as, according to tradition, images of him were usually carved of wood, as can be seen in Fig.29. We do have one notable example of him used as part of a fountain (Fig.28), although the lack of similar finds suggests this was an unusual way to represent him, particularly striking is his classical rather than archaic body, and there are other archaic marble

121 Kent Hill (1981) 86.

figures, but again these are far from common place.[122] He would be represented in an ithyphallic state and often in an archaic style. Both Fig.29 and Fig.30. Provide evidence for earlier Greek worship of a Priapus figure modelled in this way, it would appear likely most Roman images of the god were similar. All aspects of the imagery surrounding him point to tradition and therefore probably great respect and reverence also, very much harking back to age old rustic shrines and cults. Priapus was very much linked with ideas of fertility and protection, and this may be why he still has a presence in gardens throughout the Roman period. Although he may not have been worshipped in such settings, and if he were it would be very difficult to trace as offerings were often perishable items such as food. His mere presence may have been enough to evoke his powers, making his image a significant addition to any garden.

The ithyphallic nature of Priapus may be considered with another function of some garden ornaments, not necessarily religious but certainly supernatural and spiritual: those of an apotropaic nature. Many different forms and images have been put forward as having this function and some scholars have even suggested that all retrospective styles could be indicative of such a power. However, only a select few figures seem to have the gravity and tradition to make it likely they were viewed by Roman audiences an such a way. Firstly to return to Priapus and his permanently erect state; other garden figures, such as satyrs, are often also shown with erections and so it is possible these comments could be generalised to a variety of figures. Carabelli has proposed that the most significant thing about a phallus is its autonomy from the body; this then implies that, as it is so fixed and unchanging, the ithyphallus can in fact

122 Kent-Hill (1981) 86.

exorcise the evil that would usually cause it to change from an erect state. It was, therefore, capable of both protecting from evil in a general sense and also promoting fertility by combating the evil that would prevent erections and conception. [123]

Similarly it appears to be the case that other objects or images that are in a fixed state also act in an apotropaic way. Masks are the most common of these and are associated with Dionysos in several ways. The most obvious is the link between the god of excess and social inversion and the wearing of masks in a theatre, in this sense we can immediately recognise the influence of Dionysos in a garden where masks are depicted. More significantly it would appear such masks were associated with early Dionysiac cult activity and have been found depicted in such a way on much earlier Greek vases (Fig.30 for example).[124] Although seeing a continuity between Greek cult practices and Roman gardens is difficult and one must be wary, it is likely that even if the cultic function of the mask no longer remained in Roman culture (although evidence for Dionysiac mysteries suggests it may still have played a part)[125] the great tradition and authority of such an image did. Its apotropaic nature may be two fold: it was firstly an image of great impact with its fixed gaze and intent stare and the propensity for such an image to dispel evil is obvious but secondly it is also possible that the mask, did not only set the context of a Dionysiac theme, but also represented the presence of the god himself.[126]

123 Carabelli (1996) 55. Also see this chapter for a more lengthy discussion of the meaning of the phallus is Dionysiac imagery, not strictly relevant in this argument but an influence upon some of the ideas.

124 See Carpenter (1997) Chapter 5 for a comprehensive discussion on fifth century BC representations of the worship of Dionysos particularly with reference to rustic cults and images of masks and herms.

125 Seaford (1981) 62.

126 Otto (1965) 86-91.

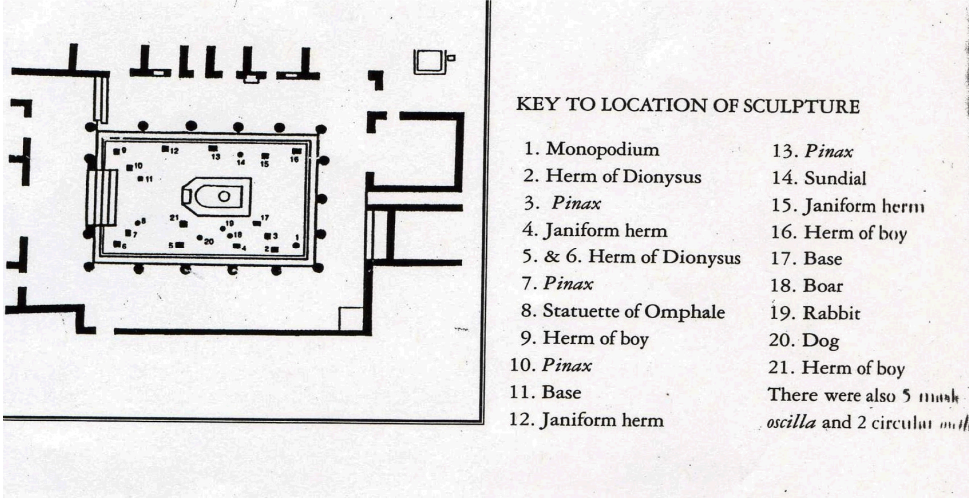


Fig. 31. Plan of the garden of the House of the Golden Cupids

Herms may also have had an apotropaic function. They are found in abundance in Roman gardens and although they do not always represent a Dionysiac figure it is often the case that they do. Many homes contained several herms, for example the plan of the House of the Golden Cupids (Fig.31) shows they had a multitude surrounding the central pool[127] and the study of many gardens suggests the overwhelming majority of domestic sculpture was in the form of herms. The herms from the House of the Vettii are amongst some of the finest examples; here we have two bi-form herms; one with heads of Dionysos and Ariadne; the other with a silen and maenad. The archaistic influences are especially clear here in the highly patterned treatment of hair and beards although the actual facial features show softer and more naturalistic influences than in some other examples. The herm has been convincingly associated, like the mask, with early rustic cult worship of Dionysos seen early in Greek vase painting,[128] it would be wrong to assume the Romans had no knowledge of this cult practice as links with Greece were long established before the conquest of the country and many Greeks lived in Italian colonies no doubt taking their religion with them. These vases show the inspiration for a static, pole like

127 Farrar (1998) 100.
128 See note on Carpenter (1997) above.

figure and although the herms were probably not worshipped in the same way in Roman gardens and the original meaning was most likely lost in the Roman adoption of the type it is possible these figures despite the loss of their religious significance became primarily decorative but also lucky objects. Many herms, it should be noted, are also in an ithyphallic state and in this respect the arguments concerning Priapus may also be applied.

Fullerton even suggests that all uses of the archaic style to represent Dionysos may relate to rustic cults and ideas of salvation and purification.[129] Presumably this suggestion is based on the rigidity and conservatism of such images and he sees them as functioning in a similar way to the masks. Although the evidence does not support such a reading for all representations of the god in this manner, it is not an idea that can be dismissed altogether.[130] He too draws attention to the apotropaic nature of the style and suggests this may be because the unusual demands a unique and less naturalistic approach. This seems a reasonable suggestion supported by the fact other protective forces across cultures are depicted in a similar static and primitive way.[131] The fact that such images seem incapable of movement through the lack of naturalism and therefore have a permanency may provide the key to understanding their depictions and functions. It seems natural to want anything with a protective nature to be permanent and unable to leave and thus archaic images of Dionysos, his retinue or associated objects like herms and masks would provide ongoing protection for the family and ensure the fertility and prosperity of the garden and the household.

129 Fullerton (1990) 129.
130 Fullerton (1990)
131 Fullerton (1990)

Although it is difficult for us to pinpoint the worship of specific deities at garden altars and at shrines it seem probable that certain elements of garden decoration carried a protective element with them, usually reflected in their unnaturalistic styles. This does not necessarily imply that such images were consciously being worshipped by the Roman household in the same way similar objects may have been worshipped by the Greeks but it does suggest that in some figures there was a respect for tradition and a knowledge of their associations. Other more generic images within domestic settings may not have carried quite so much spiritual weight and tradition with them and here we may find the religious meaning considerably more difficult to ascertain.

Decorative or Religious?

It is possible that certain decorated household objects were associated with the cult of Dionysos. We have previously acknowledged the fact that there is a strong possibility that members of the Dionysiac mysteries worshipped within the house and it is therefore likely that houses in which this took place would contain objects, presumably decorated with Dionysiac imagery, for use in such rites. It has been suggested many of these would be decorated with retrospective relief of the *thiasos* and possible objects include: candelabra, vases, marble bases and decorative relief such as *oscilla* and marble slabs.[132] Unfortunately, a more precise knowledge of the cult activities and their locations is lacking and therefore it appears many of these objects were purely decorative. In fact, the number and spread of objects decorated in such a manner also suggests an aesthetic function for such objects. They would be

132 Touchette (1995) 40-49.

Fig. 32. A Lamp bearing Silenos.

highly appropriate decorative ware for dinner parties and dining areas and although they may have been used to propagate other messages about the patron it would appear a message of religious devotion was rarely one of them. The practical functions within the house of such objects implies they were actually in use and, although we cannot discount the possibility that in some cases this may have been for ritual, in most houses this would not have been the case. Nor can we presume that an object was religious because it has been used in rituals at other times or may be useful in ritual circumstances.[133] Clear examples of such objects include a Hellenistic style silenos bearing a lamp from Herculaneum, a handle attachment in the shape of a mask of a silenos and a tripod with satyrs from the House of Julia Felix (Fig.32). There is no doubt

133 Touchette (1995) puts forward an especially weak argument in this respect claiming, for example, that the find spots of candelabra do not rule out a religious function and that relief sculptures with Dionysiac subjects have been found in temples. Neither example proves or even strongly suggests a religious function for such objects within the household. See 40-49.

Fig. 33. Bronze statuette of Dionysos

such objects were created to entertain rather than to take part in cult rituals or become items of devotion and not one of them was discovered in a religious context. If we are to presume the whole house to be a religious context we are in danger of generalising too far.

We have clearly established the popularity of the Dionysiac theme in Roman domestic settings and especially the garden and we have seen that the Roman home was a setting for religious events; furthermore, we have conjectured that Dionysiac objects in specific religious contexts within the home or with a specific traditional form may have held a religious meaning. However, we have not yet explored whether or not the vast majority of Dionysiac images in more general domestic contexts were also related specifically to the worship of Dionysos. Here many scholars only refer to the matter or provide mixed views, very few strongly argue for or against. One scholar who argues strongly in favour of a religious reading of Dionysiac characters, specifically maenads, is

Lori-Ann Touchette and we shall use aspects of her arguments as a starting point for this discussion.

We have already dealt with the first of her arguments: an assertion that much of the religious significance is already implicit because of a classical origin and a criticism of scholars who deny continuity in religious meaning from Greek to Roman monuments.[134] This is a tenuous argument. We have seen in earlier chapters that context is incredibly important in the understanding of these objects and once they are removed from their Greek contexts or reproduced for a Roman art market it is difficult to see how specific meanings may have stayed with figures. Although it is possible in some precise contexts (for example those found in *lararia*), it cannot be generalised to all sacred objects and motifs. This is especially true of minor decorative figures like the Kallimachean Maenad reliefs, the focus of Touchette's study, which were reproduced time and again in a whole variety of media, formulae and locations. She furthers this argument by accepting that some meaning may be lost in Roman contexts but asserts that the Romans compensated for this by adding extra motifs to compositions, for example adding a garland or cymbals, but this stretches the evidence too far.[135] There is no suggestion that the addition of other Dionysiac symbols made reliefs more religious in meaning. In fact it is just as likely this is the artist embellishing his older model with suitable decoration that is in keeping with his general theme. Also if it is reasonable to suggest that adding Dionysiac or general religious paraphernalia to an image specifies its religious nature surely the fact the figure is Dionysiac should in itself be enough. The only counter argument she provides for this is a presumption that sculptors

134 Touchette (1995) 33-34.
135 Touchette (1995) 36-38.

simply wished to make the religious nature a little more explicit.[136]

On a smaller scale Dwyer has suggested that some statuettes of Dionysos found in houses in Pompeii once belonged in dining rooms, he further suggests that in this context these statues had a divine presence, standing in for the god himself and turning the diners into his *thiasos*.[137] It is certainly true that a dining room would be an appropriate place to find images of Dionysos but further than that we are again looking at speculation. There is no particular reason why small bronze statuettes from dining rooms should have any more significance than a statuette in the garden and although this may be an example of cult activity tied to the Dionysiac mysteries the fact that these images were not even found in situ, let alone with any further evidence of cultic rites, prohibits us from drawing such a strong conclusion as to their function.

As we are dealing with so much emulation in the Roman art market we cannot rule out the possibility that some of the figures we are dealing with were modelled upon cult statues, we have already ruled out a continuity of meaning from one context to another but the significance of the original may have affected the popularity of the type, especially if the statue was moved to a new religious context in Rome. We are not concerned with any devotional function here, in fact this supports a decorative function just as much, but religious contexts in Rome may provide some explanation for the popularity of certain figural types.[138]

136 Touchette (1995) 36.
137 Dwyer (1982) 123.
138 Marvin (1989) 38.

Summary

There is certainly plenty of evidence for the household acting as a centre of religious activity. On a day to day basis this involved worshipping at household shrines and *lararia* and the presence of a limited number of figures of Dionysos or his retinue suggest some may have carried out a particular devotion to the god by including him in such contexts. Out with these specific contexts it becomes much more difficult to determine which figures, if any, had a religious significance. Here we have seen that figures in more traditional forms or from old rustic cults may have more significance not simply because of tradition, although this obviously plays a part, but because their associations were more personal and less divine, they performed as apotropiac monuments or invoked connotations of fertility and the archaic style used to represent many of these adds to the authority of the images. Still their function, although it may appear to link to Greek cults, must be considered in light of Roman domestic and religious space. Due to a lack evidence, both material and literary, however, the full implications of such objects may never be fully understood. With regard to more generic images of the Dionysiac retinue, arguing they each had a religious significance or were cult objects simply stretches the available evidence too far. It appears the Romans did not have quite so clear a distinction between the profane and the sacred and many objects may have had a duality of meanings in domestic settings. However, the evidence available to us does not allow us to firmly draw such conclusions. There are few literary references to worship beyond that of the lares and genius in the home and many of the objects themselves cannot be associated with a particular religious context within the

home. It may well be the case that every garden was a shrine to Dionysos[139] but with the limited evidence available it would be unwise to make such a definite statement regarding the religious function of these objects.

We may also consider just how personal Roman religious practices actually were. We have seen in the prominent displays of *lararia* common to every home that worship could have a very public nature to it and although it may have entailed some personal devotion many may have been adhering to social conventions in this matter. The outward religious display was the only way to be truly part of the Roman community and it provided an opportunity to embellish the home and display wealth as well. It has been described as never concerning 'the most intimate reaches of individual settlement' but also as having 'repercussions in the social and therefore political scene.'[140] The other religious objects we have dealt with may have had a more personal function; it was established in Chapter 3 that the Dionysiac mystery cults were incredibly popular in the Roman period and these cults did require a great deal of devotion in return for rewards in the afterlife. Whether individuals joined such cults for the social benefits or truly religious reasons we cannot be sure but we can assume devotees would have some indication of their commitment in the house and this is possibly the case with smaller cult statues in known religious contexts. Worship or display of rustic and apotropaic symbols and deities is unfortunately also an inconclusive field of study but the benefits such images brought to the individual would surely make them more personal than official religions. This is, of course, based on limited evidence and it remains difficult for us to reach any concrete conclusions about the nature of Dionysiac worship

139 Jashemsk (1979) 124.
140 Varone & dell'Orto (1992) 135.

within the household largely because of the lack of written evidence to support the imagery and also because of the nature of Roman life which constantly blurred distinctions; it is possible an item was both religious and secular at the same time but unfortunately we cannot assume this without evidence.

To return to the Priapus fountain from the House of the Vettii, here we have an unusual sculpture representing a deity but there is little context to suggest the patron had a particular devotion to Dionysos. Other garden and household ornaments are fairly typical. They include herms and small scale sculpture, most of which has a Dionysiac theme, and so it would be unsubstantiated if we were to claim the Priapus, or any other of the Dionysiac sculptures as being religious. However, there were other suggestions in the house that the Vetii were concerned with prosperity, for example images of Mercury, and we could therefore suggest such an elaborate image of Priapus was first and foremost a decorative and amusing conversational piece but further to that may have been a symbol of their good fortune and an apotropaic item to keep the luck in tact.

Society and Politics: The Private House and the Public Realm

In the preceding chapters it has become clear that the social and political lives of Roman citizens were very much intertwined particularly for those in the upper echelons of society. We have also seen the many ways in which these aspects of public life infiltrated the private sphere; to such an extent that it could perhaps be argued that the private sphere did not exist at all. More importantly we have seen that Roman culture was very much a visual one and art could convey a whole variety of messages to a patron's contemporaries. It therefore stands to reason that much of the art commissioned in this period had some reflection of the social and political environment and interacted fully with it according to the wishes of the patron.

Greece

An event of great importance in both a political and societal sense was the conquest of Greece. Scholars have varied in the emphasis they have put upon this phenomenon in terms of art history but its frequent mention in the ancient sources suggests the Romans themselves viewed it as significant. In Chapter One we argued the retrospective objects of the Roman era were devoid of any original Greek meaning. This does not, however, necessarily remove any importance attached to the fact some objects were still clearly derived from Greek subjects and early on in the exchange between Greek and Roman art this was still significant.

The literary accounts are full of great lists of art works and luxuries that arrived in Rome as the result of war plunder and many highlight this as a turning point

for Roman culture. We shall come to the implications of this a little later on. Pliny the Elder's list of Greek artefacts in Rome is very much a tool for highlighting the supremacy of Rome. Not only is intellect and sophistication a by product of so much visible Greek culture but it is also the ultimate display of Rome's military and cultural might.[141] In fact, as Carey points out his list of Nicias' works is basically a list of Roman victories and the even the list of the wonders of the world is linked to the wonders of Rome, another symbol of their military abilities.[142] This is attested through the many works put on public display, initially in triumphs and later in the permanent public displays created under Augustus. Rome had much to celebrate in conquering a culture it admired so. It would appear, despite the assertions of some scholars, that aesthetics and artist were not the primary factors dictating what was plundered. Instead it would seem that monetary value was of the utmost importance as this booty could be used to fund further campaigns and secondary to this was the psychological or symbolic impact of taking a particular object both from the perspective of the victors and the conquered. Many of the items taken would have been significant to the defeated city, for example images of rulers or cult statues, this would undoubtedly leave the city in no doubt that it had been defeated and would deal quite a strong psychological blow to any resurgence.[143] At the same time these images could be morale boosting or symbolic for the Romans especially since they shared many of the Greek pantheon and admired many of their heroes. Therefore art work could be used as an effective weapon of war. All of this, however, relates to original pieces of Greek art on public display; how do we connect this to the retrospective Dionysiac pieces very

141 Carey (2003) 83-94
142 Carey (2003) 83 & 94.
143 Ridgway (1989) 11, 17 & 18.

much created by Roman culture in the domestic sphere? I think the sentiment required here is neatly summed up by Dillon who states ' It is surely a powerful index of one's political supremacy to take the public monuments of a defeated enemy and turn them into garden sculpture.'[144] This is obviously a little too narrow a statement as it does not take into account theories of eclecticism or the fact the Romans were interpreting the monuments in their own unique ways but the general idea is very poignant. It shows that the grandeur of captive art could still remain through an association of the styles of the defeated and therefore, to those educated enough to understand the origins of these forms, at least on a subconscious level these pieces could relate to the greatness of Rome on an everyday basis. Obviously this is a connotation that would become more implicit and subconscious over time as generations that had seen the fall of Greece passed on but the connection to the public monuments would still remain.

A household filled with retrospective sculptures undoubtedly also made a comment about the intellect and sophistication of its inhabitants. Although the specific Greek models and original meanings may no longer be relevant the themes and styles of retrospective domestic sculpture still brought associations of a classical education and a knowledge of Greek history, culture and philosophy, whether this was actually the case or not. This is very true with regard to our Dionysiac subjects, the theme alone suggests firstly a knowledge of Greek religion and mythology and also links the owners with the elegance and advancement of the Hellenistic courts or archaic Athens. The houses themselves also took on the task of emphasising the Greek knowledge of its

144 Dillon (2000) 30.

owner and some of the more public areas were given Greek names. In a society that prized learning in general and Greek education in particular so highly it was important that an individual demonstrate to his peers his mastery of these areas too. One way to do this was by excelling in rhetoric in the law courts, the other was through the decoration of the areas of the home on view to peers as discussed in Chapter 2. Many of the Dionysiac pieces may also have functioned as conversational pieces, particularly those in areas for entertaining, for example bronzes of Dionysos found in possible dining areas or lamp stands decorated with satyrs. Mattusch, in a lecture given at the University of Maryland,[145] convincingly discusses the uses of items as conversational pieces and since we presume guests would be of a similar education to the hosts it is feasible that to help with social interaction certain art works would be placed so they could be discussed by the group. This would not only help with the entertainment but would allow the patron to demonstrate his knowledge of the item and Greek culture and draw attention to the pieces in his collection.[146]

Luxury

Often at odds with the ideals considered above is the notion of luxury which the Roman writers claim was inspired by the Greeks and closely connected with the infiltration of Greek art into Roman society. Many writers talk of the ruin of Roman society after contact with the east. Luxury was considered un-Roman and contradicted the austerity of Republican morals. Therefore leading Romans, including Augustus himself, attempted to present a public image of

145 Lecture entitled 'Pompeii and the Roman Villa: Exhibiting Art and Culture around the Bay of Naples. Given on 29/10/08. Accessed through http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4g7V0jFee8o on 23/07/09 at 13.00.

146 Petron. Sat. 50. We see Trimalchio employing similar techniques by discussing the origins of his serving dishes etc.

simple living and tastes. Although frequently condemned by writers, it was in fact necessary in such a competitive society as the elites had to create a way of differentiating themselves and their property from the rest of the populace and the vast majority of elite Romans (as well as those emulating them) lived in comfort and luxury despite their rhetoric to the contrary. The ultimate displays of luxuries are to be found at the grand villas outside of the towns such as the Villa of the Papyri and Hadrian's Villa at Tivioli. In both of these cases we find not only huge buildings and gardens but also extensive decoration and sculptural collections, Hadrian's Villa had over thirty eight statues and according to MacDonald and Pinto no habitable space was left without some form of decoration.[147] Dionysiac imagery is common in such settings and is often found in large numbers and a variety of objects, styles and subjects. The Dionysiac influence at the Villa of the Papyri is overwhelming. The villa was probably owned by L. Calpurnius Piso Caesanius who was accused by Cicero of plundering Greece, although we should note he was not accused of taking it to his own house and therefore we should not presume this is how he acquired his sculptural collection.[148] Evidently he was a very wealthy man, particularly if our assertion Romans plundered the most valuable pieces is true, and a member of the elite with military prestige having served in Greece. This villa represents, therefore, the tastes and practices of the top echelons of society and the luxury they were so often accused of in the written sources. There were so many Dionysiac figures we could not possibly consider them all here[149] so we will examine a few of the most striking examples. The figures range from grand and imposing to small scale and poor quality. Perhaps the most varied collection are

147 MacDonald and Pinto (1995) 141.
148 Mattusch (2005) 20-21.
149 In fact, many have already been considered elsewhere in this study.

the fifteen bronze piped fountain figures consisting of silenoi and putti, they all appear to come from the same workshop and the majority are of fairly poor quality, particularly the welding.[150] However, the silenos riding the wineskin is considerably better and was presumably the focal point of the display. The area surrounding the pool contained two of the most impressive life-size bronze satyrs in Roman art. One is a sleeping satyr, with many similarities in pose to the Barberini Faun and it is likely they stem from a similar model at the other end of the pool was a drunken satyr full of the joy and excess traditionally associated with these figures and the drunken satyr was a very popular topos in Roman art. When combined with the large peristyle and gardens, elements of water and many other statuettes and herms representing Dionysiac subjects and countless animals these pieces undoubtedly created the feel of a hedonistic garden of freedom and luxury, with playful images at every turn. Only Dionysiac themes could create this effect. In the Roman mindset they were very much associated with wildness and ecstasy and only retrospective styles, especially Hellenistic, could mirror these free flowing feelings and bring the Greek world of luxury into the domestic sphere.[151]

In turn the use of such luxuries by the elites leads to the diffusion of these tastes through other levels of society since to partake in the social competition any one with aspirations mush adopt the visual language of the elites to present themselves in the same manner and therefore as worthy of participation. Luxuries lower down the social scale were not necessarily reproduced in the same forms with those with less wealth opting to present the same image in a

150 Mattusch (2005) 296–300.

151 Lissarrague (1993) 207-220. Discusses the appropriateness of satyrs specifically for creating the idea of a wilderness. We can extend these ideas to many other elements of the Dionysiac retinue.

different medium or scale. For example paintings of architectural forms or small terracotta statuettes rather than marble sculptures. This diffusion of art shows clearly that the visual language of the elites was adopted by all, even those without the education to understand its nuances. Therefore, this language must have had various levels of understanding and once adopted by the whole of society its Greek traits must have become less significant. We have from House 7.12.17. a charming bronze statuette of Dionysos, although we do not know the exact context for the display of this object as it is believed to have fallen from an upper storey we do know a little about the circumstances of its patron. This statuette was owned by the proprietor of a *fullonica* and we can therefore presume with some certainty that he was not from any elite or socially exalted class; although it is possible he had some degree of prosperity.[152] Here we have an example, therefore, of those further down the social scale using the same themes and styles as elite villas but on a smaller scale more appropriate to the surroundings.[153]

To many people replicating the luxuries of the elite was the only way for them to partake in the elite lifestyle which they may well have had the wealth for but due to social standing were excluded. These are the wealthy freedmen and they are given their most extreme characterisation in Petronius' *Satyricon*. Through the character and lifestyle of Trimalchio we see a world of excess and luxury and above all attempts to emulate the life of the elite wherever possible. He even has a country estate simply to have one supply his diners as he is not even

152 Dwyer (1982) 53-54.

153 In fact this statuette was found with a surprising number of bronzes for such humble dwellings, the reason for this remains a mystery but all were of a similar scale as it would have been inappropriate to use large scale statuary in such a setting.

aware of its precise location.[154] His house contains all the trappings of a luxury villa such as garden ponds, baths and a 'labyrinth' of rooms.[155] More significantly his luxuries reveal constant attempts to appear elite, for example the wearing on a ring of iron that appears gold. Present at the feast are many freedmen friends of Trimalchio and their words give us an insight into the wealth acquired by such men and the troubles with fortunes they could have.

At Pompeii the House of the Vettii is known to have been owned by two members of the *augustales*, who were usually freedmen, they were probably brothers, and thus the house provides an insight into the tastes of freedmen. It has been suggested that this house reveals the tastes of vulgar freedmen. However, when examined with other houses in Pompeii the array of decoration is quite typical. The décor is generally of a Greek nature with Greek myths depicted on the interior walls and a peristyle garden. The sculptures are generally connected with Dionysos, herms represent the god himself and his entourage, elsewhere cupids, satyrs and maenads are depicted and the fountain is adorned with a statue of Priapus. The house certainly demonstrates a high degree of wealth and luxury and it has been described as one of the most beautiful houses at Pompeii[156] yet there is nothing unusual in the decoration, we simply see fine examples of the objects we see elsewhere. The only exception is the Priapus as discussed in the previous chapter images of him were usually produced in wood. It is possible, then, that Priapus held a special significance for the owners, as he is associated with fortune and prosperity and may provide a suitable figure for gentlemen building a place in society. The other figures

154 Petron. Sat. 48.
155 Petron. Sat. 73.
156 Stewart (2008) 54.

with associations of fortune add weight to this argument. For example attributes of Mercury are found in the painted decoration[157] and the lararium had images of snakes, familiar symbols of luck in the Roman world. The other sculptural elements which reflect the general taste at the time undoubtedly reflect a display of *Romanitas* and an attempt to show a specific cultural awareness. In Trimalchio's feast we see many attempts to show a knowledge of Greek culture[158] and the decoration of this house does the same, it also sets the owners out as part of the wider Roman culture as they are aware of the current tastes in décor amongst their peers and the elites of society.

The use of such retrospective styles must also have had very explicit political connotations. Upon coming to power Augustus had adopted for himself classicizing styles throughout his public art works. The association of the Imperial family with retrospective styles continued and reached its peak under Hadrian, the infamous hellenophile. It is therefore likely that those also using retrospective styles in their homes, in a similar manner to including imperial portraits, we aligning themselves with the imperial family by following the au-courant styles.[159] Of course, retrospection was already a feature of Roman art in the Republic but the associations of power that came from using styles endorsed by an emperor cannot have been lost upon politically ambitious members of the elite. Bartman highlights that if these sculptural collections and retrospective styles could be self-aggrandizing to an emperor other collectors

157 Petron. Sat. 29. Notably Trimalchio is also depicted with attributes of Mercury.
158 Petron. Sat. 29. The house is decorated with scenes from the Odyssey and Iliad. Petron. Sat. 48. Trimalchio talks of reading Greek stories as a child.
159 See Brilliant (1994), Galinsky (1999) & Gieger (2008) for discussions of Augustan classicism and the Greek tastes of Hadrian.

must have attempted to build on this also.[160]

Decorum

If over time the Greekness of these objects became less important what dictated the choice of them in future domestic displays? Why did they not become obsolete and replaced by a new more relevant set of styles and themes? There are several aspects to be considered in the answer to these questions as Roman visual communication, as with any other language, had various levels of meaning and function.

Firstly we return to the concept of decorum. As the idea of decorum dealt very specifically with appropriateness it required objects to be tailored to their surroundings. Decorum gives complete control firstly to the patron, and the artist working for him, but ultimately to those capable of judging appropriateness; the elite. In this way the upper echelons of society both set their own agendas in the art they used to represent themselves and were at the same time controlled by their peers. So both innovation and tradition were promoted simultaneously. It also meant if the meaning of the object was determined by its surroundings so the function or implications of the display area could be dictated by the objects within it. For example in a garden mammoth statues and Olympian subjects would have been out of place both physically and psychologically.[161] Therefore the use of more rural Dionysiac deities and figures was much more appropriate to a domestic setting and they could create within the domestic garden the idea of luxury, paradise and wilderness. For example in the House of the Golden Cupids we see sculpture

160 Bartman (1995) 76.
161 Kent-Hill (1981) 85.

scattered around the garden to create a haphazard and wild effect.

Decorum can also be related to aesthetics, although, as we have seen, aesthetics were not the foremost priority for a Roman patron, it would be foolish to think at least some did not have an appreciation of objects for their beauty, in fact, Roman literature is full of praise for artists that managed to create beautiful objects.[162] Decorum was not just a matter of finding the correct theme for the setting it also required an appropriate style. It would also be wrong to suggest the Romans did not have some form of artistic canon, the sheer number of replicas of particular types suggests otherwise, however, they did not select these works solely on the names of famous artists. There were several factors that could influence a types popularity; it may have been included in a public display, have been used in a religious sense, have a famous wealthy owner or donor or it may be an aesthetically pleasing example of that subject.[163] Once an object was part of this canon replication and diffusion throughout the Empire was ensured.[164] Any item that came to signify Roman culture was inevitably popular as increasing numbers of people set out to further themselves through adopting typically Roman approaches to decoration. The aesthetics of decorum have led Hölscher to attempt to assign different styles for different figures assuming each retrospective style to be used where considered appropriate. He includes the styles of Phidias as suitable for representing the state gods, Polyclitean styles for heroic *virtus* in mythical warriors and either Praxitelean or Hellenistic styles for the retinue of Dionysos as these present luxury and

162 Bartman (1994) 75.
163 Marvin (1989) 38.
164 Bartman (1994) 75.

wildness.[165] This approach is far too precise for Roman art in which, we have seen, eclecticism and inventive displays were popular, it does, however, embody the spirit of Roman decorum.[166] It shows certain representational choices were necessary if the message the patron wished to portray was to be understood and it proves with associations attached to certain styles it was possible for the Romans to use retrospective styles as a universal language understood across the empire by all classes.

Decorum was very much related to the Roman love of tradition and simplicity and by following such social codes when selecting their art patrons could align themselves with this ideal. We have seen that any excess or moves that were too radical for the Roman elite were met with great censure in the law courts and literature and it was therefore necessary that anyone wishing to not only gain but also retain a position in society be seen to respect the past austerity of Roman culture. We have, of course, seen that in reality there were many ways to appear to follow tradition but in fact innovate at the same time and it has been highlighted by Koortbojian that the process of cultural self-identity is on-going and evolves with the people. The balance for the Romans was progressing whilst being seen to follow tradition; decorum and eclecticism by fusing different styles and themes and loosely defining appropriateness allowed them to do just that.

Power

Fredrick has convincingly argued that erotic images in the decoration of Roman houses were displays of power on the part of the patron. He mainly looks at

165 Hölscher (2006) 244.
166 See Elsner (2006) 274 for some further criticisms of Hölscher's approach.

scenes in wall paintings but since the subject matter is in many cases the same and the eroticism of certain garden pieces is undeniable it is worth considering with regard to sculpture.[167] Although it does not seem likely that all of these representations are a way of the male expressing domination of the female, as women used all areas of the house too,[168] the phallus and the superior position of the man in such images may well be an allusion to the prominence of the patron in society. Included in this is the power of the master over slave and client and perhaps an aspect of domination over Greece as it is Greek mythology they are ultimately eroticising.[169] We have also seen that a patron could express his power through the taming of nature in the garden; Dionysiac subjects surely played a part in this also. They enhanced many of the connotations of wilderness in the garden, so if the patron could control the chaos the Dionysiac retinue can bring he is powerful, wise and the embodiment of order.

In light of these Roman approaches to collecting it it perhaps unsurprising to note the sculptural displays in most domestic contexts are relatively homogeneous. This is true both in houses close to each other, for example Pompeii, and it is shown to be an empire wide phenomenon with Dionysiac sculpture found in domestic contexts in the east, for example Antioch and as far a field as Gaul and Britain. This should suggest to us that although we have seen these images could have many possible meanings they were universal meanings and throughout the empire there were individuals wishing to express such messages. Primarily we should see Dionysiac images in a domestic

167 Fredrick (1995) 266-287.
168 Fredrick (1995) 276.
169 Fredrick (1995) 276-279.

context as something inherently Roman which individuals with different cultural backgrounds could adopt as a display of their *Romanitas* and being Roman was obviously something which transcended class boundaries and nationalities.

Summary

Although the individual patron presumably had much influence and we cannot, therefore, assume a single set of motives in the selection of domestic decoration,[170] we can clearly see that many of these motives related to the need to be accepted by society. The key thing in the selection of objects was proving one's *Romanitas* and this is true of all sections of society. This explains the use of Dionysiac objects in both villas and small houses at Pompeii. Marx said:

> Art is not merely an expression of class ideology or an epiphenomenon of social structure but an operative system of representation which acts reciprocally on society with its own special effects.

This is very true of Roman art: it accounts not only for the link between art production and society; it draws attention to the interaction of art with society. Art was not art for art's sake and a chance to show wealth it was a system of representation which, although initially driven by the elites, allowed all classes to stake their claim of a place in society, a society they then hoped to fully interact with.

Retrospective Dionysiac objects especially afforded many opportunities for patrons to display their *Romanitas*. As objects derived from Greek culture they allowed educated patrons to show their educated peers the level of their

170 Bartman (1994) 74.

knowledge and sophistication, they related to the conquest of Greece and Rome's military might and they could be used to develop a luxury setting. Across the social scale, regardless of education, these subjects could reflect the luxuries of the elite villas, create a wilderness and allow the owner opportunities to show his power through the ability to train it and suggest a world of revelry and leisure. All of these meanings and functions ultimately combine to suggest the power of the patron and his ability to be Roman, and therefore to follow traditions and codes such as *decorum*, both vital attributes to prosper in the highly competitive and changing Roman society.

Conclusions

It is clear from our investigations that the use of retrospective styles to represent Dionysiac subjects was not an arbitrary decision nor was the placement, in large volumes, of these figures throughout Roman domestic settings and especially in the garden. We have seen that these sculptures could have a variety of functions and meanings both for the patron and the viewer but primarily they allowed the patron to express something about themselves and represent themselves and their family in a specific way.

Retrospection

The use of Greek styles in Dionysiac sculptures was highly significant. First and foremost emulation was a prevalent part of Roman culture not only with regards to the visual but also in literature and rhetoric and even in religion through the emulation of cult statues, and also in personal emulation through the ancestor cult. Emulation was regarded as a great skill since in the Roman mindset it was only possible to create a perfect whole through the appropriation of the most suitable or desirable parts of other works. Emulation also helped to create a visual language through which the Romans could communicate across classes and cultures and the use of Greek styles provided a convenient form for this to embody. Greek styles already carried certain connotations and meanings and by appropriating these and placing them in Roman contexts the Romans were able to produce very specific messages about themselves as individuals and as a culture. These Greek styles were essentially the letters which they combined using sculptural assemblages and more significantly eclecticism.

Eclecticism has long characterised Roman art, although to the modern eye it may create a certain amount of dissonance in an image, eclecticism made Roman art highly adaptable, innovative and practical for their uses. Through the strategy of eclecticism Roman patrons could cast themselves in a variety of guises depending on their needs by combining different styles and figures as they saw fit. Sometimes this was purely artistic innovation, as in the combination of different figures on neo-attic reliefs with different origins, but in other cases it was a deliberate strategy to associate the owner with a particular virtue or display his knowledge of a particular subject to his peers.

Overriding all of these artistic choices, as well as many other decisions in Roman life, was the principle of *decorum.* This dictated the use of certain figures or styles in certain settings based on the idea of appropriateness. The Romans loved the idea of tradition and convention and throughout their history harked back to the days of Republican moderation and austerity; decorum is very much part of that culture. It prevented any outlandish decisions on the part of the patron and ensured tradition continued to have some hold over Roman life. It also helped to set the visual language more firmly in the Roman consciousness; if objects could only be used in certain settings it tied down their meaning and added to their significance, it also meant that if an object or style was used in a different way or combined with other things it could have new or even more precise interpretations, as we see on sarcophagi.

Display

Vital to the use of display as a method of communication is the setting as this can also determine the interpretation and meanings of objects. For the Roman

citizen the main forum for personal display was the household. As the house was such a public area it provided ample opportunities for the owner to represent himself to his fellow citizens in a huge variety of ways. The Roman house was in reality as much a method of communication between a family and the outside world as it was a residence for a household; although very little could be seen from the outside, with narrow *fauces* providing the only access from the street, but the interior would be lavishly decorated, according to the means of the owners, with all manner of objects. In keeping with the principle of decorum we find a relatively limited array of subjects but each is capable of revealing much about the patron's view of his position in the world and his aspirations in a competitive society. All aspects of the house contributed to the presentation of the family and especially the paterfamilias as the model Roman citizen adhering to tradition and fully interacting with social and political roles; this includes architecture and wall painting but more significantly sculptural display. The house was considered not as a private area for the family to interact but as a hive of social activity with many social rituals such as the *salutatio* and dining taking place on a regular basis. For this reason it was important the house be capable of accommodating large numbers of people and of regulating them in some way; it is possible different forms and levels of decoration helped to do this and it would also appear there were forms of social convention governing which areas of the house people entered. Most importantly the Roman house had to be flexible as it constantly changed according to the social needs of the family and their guests. The house also had a symbolic function; it could provide a presence that symbolised the paterfamilias when he was away and so even when not in the centre of political life his role as a citizen would not be forgotten. It was also designed in such a

way as to focus attention from the outside through the centre of the house into the areas in which the *paterfamilas* received guests and conducted business; this effectively put him at the centre of the house, his family life and a social and political life. It also provided further opportunities for displays of wealth and grandeur through the embellishment of the most visible areas from the doorway, namely the atrium, tablinium and peristyle.

The countryside counterpart of the family domus, the villa, was just as significant in Roman life and public display. Although in theory areas of private retreat, villas were at the centre of a thriving social community with constant attendance of guests and activities such as philosophical discussions. Therefore, villa decoration was also used as a means of personal display; here away from the more stringent criticisms the patron was less inclined to display military or imperial themes and instead, with decorum very much in mind, created areas of personal relaxation usually heavily based upon Greek ideals.

Both types of residence put great emphasis upon the garden and the fact even the most modest of houses at Pompeii were willing to use space and expense to create their own miniature villa garden attests to their importance. Gardens were multifunctional like the rest of the house but most significantly they were areas in which the owner could show his mastery of nature and create his very own paradise, displaying his sophisticated cultural tastes as he did so.

Domestic areas were filled with images of the god Dionysos and his retinue. These figures encompassed a variety of styles appropriate to the symbolism and functions to such wild figures who regardless represented a god intimately

connected to many of the rituals and activities of the house. Dionysiac figures represent a huge number of our remaining domestic sculpture and their appeal was far reaching. They are found throughout the empire, including in Cyrenacia and Gaul,[171] and their appeal is not limited only to the elites of society, we find them represented in the grandest of villas but also in the most modest of apartments. It would certainly appear that Dionysos was one of the most popular gods for the Roman people, some of this may be accounted for by the spread of the Dionysiac mysteries, so popular the senate felt the need to curb their influence. This may have led to an increase in personal devotion to the god, although this is difficult for us to trace in the archaeological record. The cult popularity of Dionysos is in keeping with the general popularity of mystery cults and eastern religions at the time as people craved a devotion more personal than the state gods who were worshipped thorough duty. With cults such as this were aspects of community and promises of salvation; elements of religion that have proved eternally popular. Dionysos was also popular as a more general figure. His associations with hedonism, feasting, drinking and ecstasy no doubt ensured this. His symbolic associations made him a suitable figure for domestic settings he could preside over any area in which entertaining took place, and as we have seen this was most of the Roman house, and he was especially suited to garden environments where he and his thiasos created an environment of Hellenistic pleasure for the patron and his guests to enjoy.

Our investigations into the religious functions of Dionysos in a domestic setting were not conclusive but suggested for most objects specific religious devotion

171 Bartman (1994) 73. At a 3rd century AD villa at Chiragon and in a assemblage of other gods at Ptolemais.

is highly unlikely. Although we know Dionysiac mystery cults were popular it is difficult to discern the objects associated with this from other household decoration featuring the Dionysiac retinue. Where figures do have a clear religious context, and it was shown that the only definite religious contexts within the home were lararia, shrines and altars we can assign a religious function as we did with the Dionysos from a lararium. These specifically religious finds, however, are rare and the vast majority of Dionysiac sculpture is scattered around the domestic sphere. In these circumstances it would be inaccurate for us to speak of the objects as religious. It is likely, given the ambiguity we found in functions within the household, that the Romans did not distinguish clearly between sacred and secular but on the basis of this alone we cannot conclude a religious function. It seems to be the case that some objects were imbued with an element of superstition as they probably functioned as apotropaic emblems or were expected to bring prosperity upon the house and many of these can be linked to archaic styles and rustic cults, with the ithyphallus and other fixed states being especially characteristic. As for the majority of Dionysiac objects in the domestic sphere they were most likely purchased to fulfil other functions; there may have been some respect or reverence for them but in the multi-functional Roman household there were other roles for them to fulfil.

Romanitas

As the Roman house was such an open social and political arena and the retrospective styles of our Dionysiac objects were fully enveloped in Roman cultural memory as part of an officially accepted visual language it is reasonable for us to conclude that in the domestic sphere these objects were

used to convey something of the patron's position in society and his aspirations. There were many levels on which these objects could function. The most basic is as decoration; however, their decorative nature does not render them insignificant; they displayed the wealth and social inclusion of the owner. Many of the decorative decisions in the Roman home were based on the choices of others, elites would follow the imperial family and other elites to include themselves and show their adherence to the principles of decorum and lower down the social scale people would emulate the elites in order to express political ambition. At no point was a decorative choice in the Roman household meaningless. Our Dionysiac objects fit into this chain especially well as initially they were the preserve of the elites at their hedonistic rural villas but eventually they filtered through the system of emulation to be included in virtually every house regardless of size or wealth.

As symbols of Greek culture Dionysos and his retinue made a more explicit political statement, one of victory and military might. Although the Greek functions and meanings of these sculptures had been lost in the process of transmission from one culture to another and through copying the myths and origins of the figures and styles would not have been lost on the Romans. Displaying the myths of the Greeks within homes was a permanent reminder of Rome as a victor. It also emulated public display which aligned individuals with the wealth and power displayed in the public arena. Most significantly the use of Greek inspired objects was an indication of the education and sophistication of the owner; despite conquering Greece the Romans retained a great respect for all things related to their culture in fact much of their education, for the elites, was based upon a Greek model. Therefore, by

displaying and discussing such objects a patron could display his knowledge to his guests. Even those without this education could suggest it by using the same objects.

The most important function of retrospective Dionysiac sculpture in the Roman household was its indication of the owner's, and by association the family's, *Romanitas*. In an expanding empire and highly competitive social system it was essential that individuals emphasise their belonging to Roman society. Those already embedded in the system had to constantly fight to maintain their positions as political mistakes or loss of favour could entail the loss of everything including life. Those not yet at the top of the political system were at the same time trying to gain recognition and advance. For both sections of society it was necessary to demonstrate full adherence to social customs and this included in the decoration of the home. Dionysiac figures in retrospective styles were used throughout the elite and imperial villas, they obeyed the conventions of decorum and suggested a typical Roman education, essentially a Greek one, but more than anything they demonstrated the patron was one of society and acknowledged and accepted the elements that made an individual and the society Roman.

Where Next?

This study was obviously not all-encompassing and it raises many significant questions for further development in this field. We looked in detail at retrospective Dionysiac objects in the private sphere and mainly focused upon the evidence provided by Italy. However, these types are found all over the empire, as we have noted in some examples, and are not limited to the private

sphere. They are found in temples, baths and theatres as well. The methodology of this study could be applied to a variety of further studies, by carefully studying the contexts in which these images are found and attempting to understand the significance of these contexts for the Romans we can learn a great deal about the functions of these objects in the Roman world. As we have seen, Roman imagery was all part of one visual language indebted to their cultural memory and it was highly adaptable. To understand Roman self-representation we must first understand the situations in which they represented themselves and the reasons it was necessary and then we must see which objects they were using in this representation. Only by combining these elements can we decode the visual language and gain an insight into the Roman approach and reaction to art.

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